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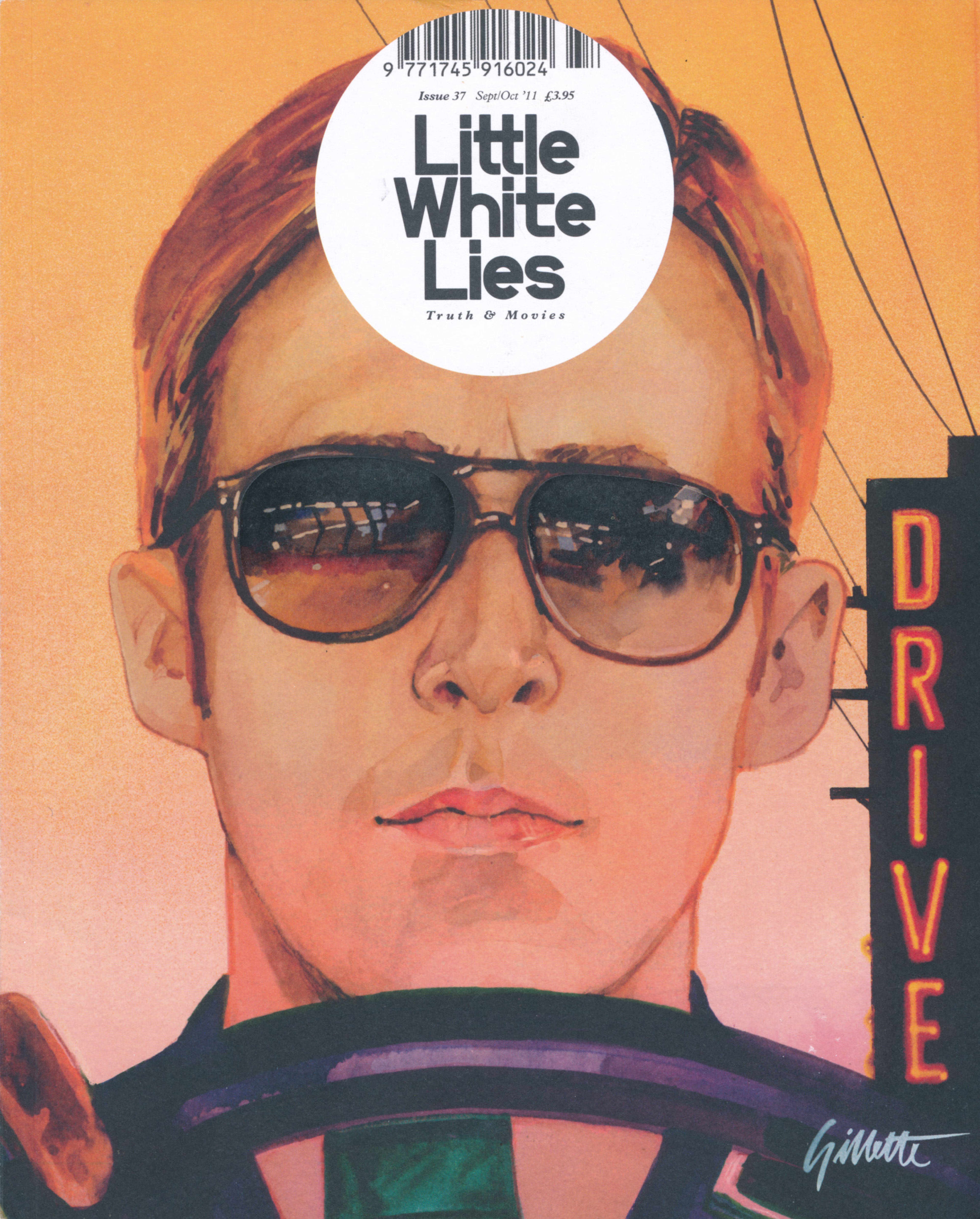
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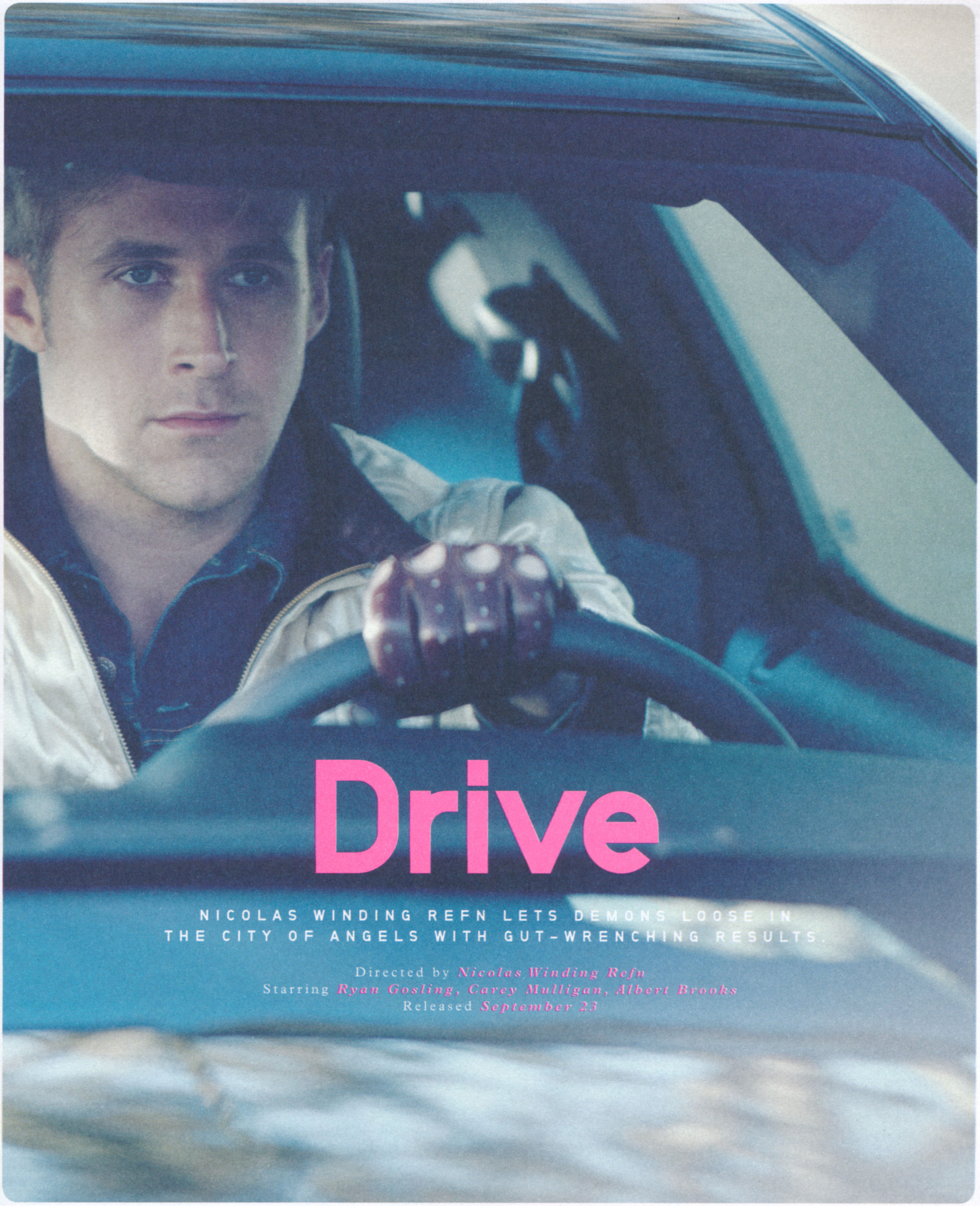
IN WHICH WE REVIEW DRIVE



Drive

NICOLAS WINDING REFN LETS DEMONS LOOSE IN THE CITY OF ANGELS WITH GUT-WRENCHING RESULTS.

Directed by *Nicolas Winding Refn*
Starring *Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan, Albert Brooks*
Released *September 23*

WORDS BY
MATT BOCHENSKI

Overlaid against the neon backdrop of LA, College and Electric Youth's shimmering synth conjures an image of 'a real human being – and a real hero.' But Driver (Ryan Gosling) isn't either of those things. His transformation from antihero to avenging angel powers a film of stomach-flipping twists and handbrake 180s that escalates – gradually, inexorably, terribly – from quiet romance to ecstatic violence. And all you can do is hang on for the ride.

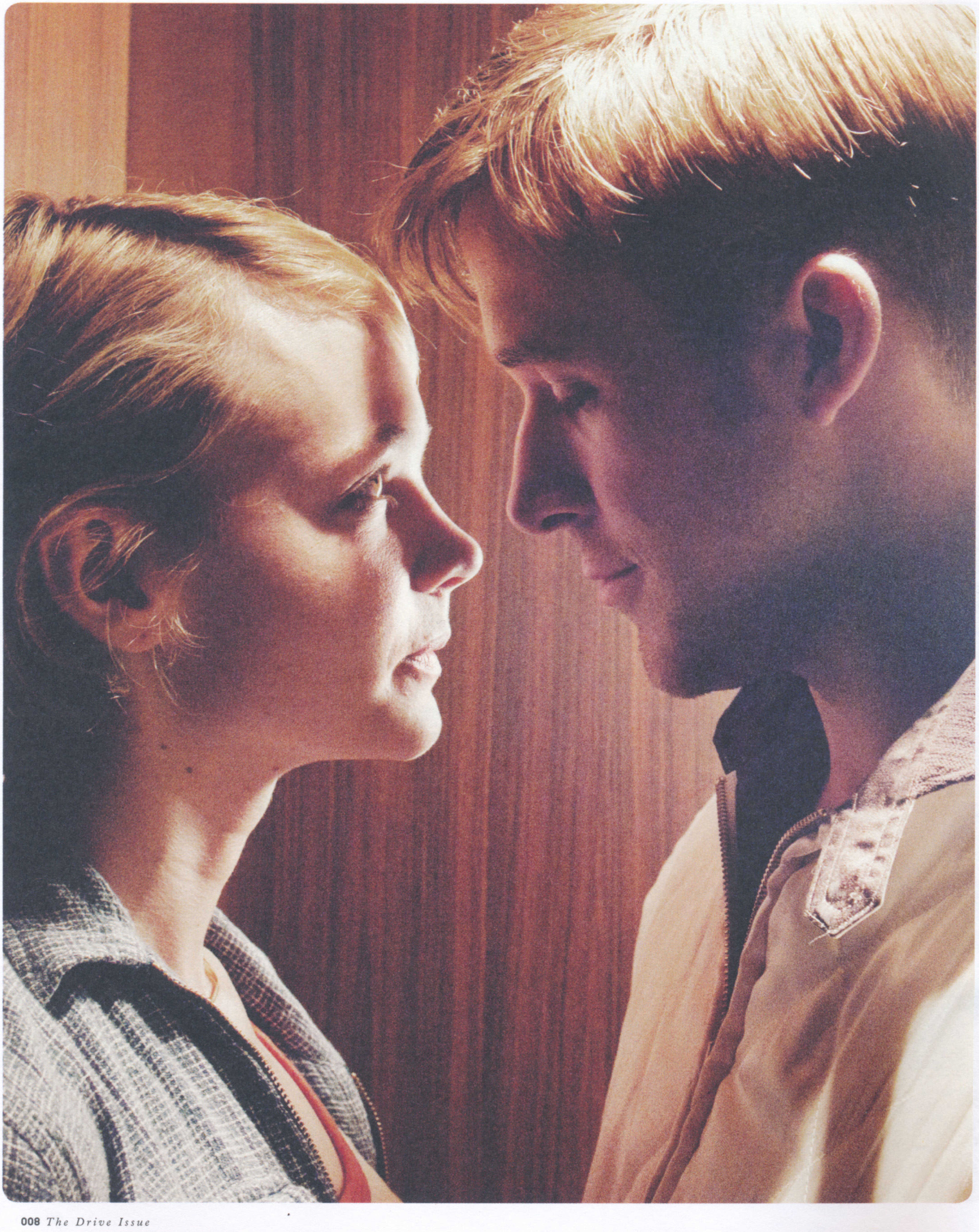
Based on the 2005 novel by James Sallis, *Drive* is a classic slice of pulp noir reimagined by Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn as a stunningly violent fairy tale. Driver is a wheelman – the go-to getaway guy for the city's more connected criminals. For the right price, you get five minutes: anything happens in that five minutes and he's yours; anything happens a minute either side and he's dust.

Refn sketches these details in an opening salvo that sees Driver waiting outside the site of an armed robbery before escaping from under the noses of the police. Shot almost exclusively from the interior of the vehicle (pulse-like soundtrack; engine rattle and clatter), it establishes Driver as a man for whom action is character. Impassive and taciturn, his most affecting quality is stillness. But like the cars prepared for him by friend and garage-owner Shannon (Bryan Cranston), Driver's unremarkable façade deliberately masks the fearsome capability beneath.

* * *

Though Refn made his name as Denmark's answer to Martin Scorsese with thug life drama *Pusher*, here he's channelling the forensic cool of Michael Mann. *Thief* is the obvious reference point (loner protagonist is driven to an act of terrible revenge), but there's a wider sense in which Refn has replicated Mann's ability to capture the nuances of LA itself.

A potent location in crime fiction, as a cinematic icon, LA has too often found itself overshadowed by East Coast rival New York. *Drive* goes some way to rectifying that, as Refn captures the squalid beauty of the city in stunningly crisp digital images.



The City of Angels has never looked so ethereal, whether viewed at night from high above the skyscrapers, or down below, eyes pressed up hard against the street. Because for all its otherworldliness, neither has LA looked so real as it does in the unforgiving sunlight – so inhabited, so rich, so full of drama and stories.

Driver's story is buried somewhere in a past we know nothing about. Where Sallis was merely circumspect about the details of his life, Refn (and scriptwriter Hossein Amini) jettisons them completely. Driver is a man without a past – an archetype (a knight on a white Dodge Charger) who exists only in this time and this place.

And Gosling – ever the chameleon, ever the reluctant Hollywood player – invests him with just enough character to hint at those hidden layers. Dressed in denim and driving gloves, he evokes a young John Wayne, moving with a dancer's swagger, as if to a rhythm only he can hear.

There was a period when Gosling's intransigence began to look like a lack of confidence. As his peers scooped up roles in comic-book blockbusters or banked franchise pay-cheques, he worked intermittently, in resolutely small films, refusing to be tempted by – or test himself in – the big studio show. But if *Half Nelson* was the film that made his career, *Drive* is going to make Gosling a star.

It's a performance that relies on a physicality and presence he's only hinted at before. Driver's few spoken lines are dragged reluctantly from his mouth, and emerge at a surprisingly feminine pitch. But if that voice and those Droopy eyes suggest some inner vulnerability, it's a fantasy soon put to rest.

And yet the point at which Refn stamps on the accelerator is also when *Drive* begins to lose traction. When Driver falls for his neighbour, Irene (Carey Mulligan), he dares to imagine a different kind of life, until Irene's husband, Standard (Oscar Isaac), is released from prison. Up to his neck in bad debts, a serious beating in front of his young son (where, in the peculiarly gruesome depiction of Standard's injuries, we receive our first hint that *Drive* is up to something) convinces Standard to ask Driver for help, which is how he finds himself acting as wheelman on a classic heist-gone-wrong.

The aftermath of this event pulls Driver into the world of low-rent gangster and one-time movie producer Bernie, (Albert Brooks) along with his partner Nino (Ron Perlman), who is himself into some serious shit with the East Coast mob. When Bernie brings the fight to Driver's door, Driver responds with a double-barrelled blast of violence, and *Drive* suddenly shifts from slow-burner into high-octane revenge thriller.

That shift is encapsulated in the film's most memorable scene – a stunning collision of eroticism and brutality that only a master maniac like Refn could pull off. In an elevator, confronted by one of Nino's henchmen and with Irene about to leave him forever, Driver kisses her before turning on the other man. It's a moment of exquisite and contradictory emotions – love, atonement, vengeance and rage – coalescing and combusting with startling ferocity. It is Driver's last chance at redemption before both he and the film reveal their true nature – a nature that even Gaspar Noé would find hard to stomach.

> **"IT'S A MOMENT OF EXQUISITE AND CONTRADICTORY EMOTIONS – LOVE, ATONEMENT, VENGEANCE AND RAGE – COALESCING AND COMBUSTING WITH STARTLING FEROCITY."**

But as Driver passes through the final stage of his transformation – from avenging angel to murderous spectre – he passes the point at which the audience might care to sit shotgun. And as you're released from the grip of Gosling's seductive charisma, nagging flaws suddenly become apparent.

As a pair, Gosling and Mulligan are too callow to suggest that years of hard living have taken their toll. Mulligan's perfect, unblemished skin exudes the healthy glow of movie stardom, not the ravaged stresses of a single mother. And as all she's asked to do is smile sweetly, keep her mouth closed and look soulful, she has little opportunity to bring Irene to life.

As Driver's actions turn from vengeance to psychosis to insanity (sane people don't turn up to work in a blood-stained jacket to collect a prop for the murder they're planning), it's very difficult to maintain any empathy. The fairy tale context may explain the film, but it doesn't make it any easier to watch.

Nor is this a question of squeamishness. The fact that the violence is filmed in unflinching and shocking detail (with knives, hammers and cut-throat razors all playing their part) is to the film's credit – and entirely in keeping with its pulp roots. But once *Drive* reaches that fever-pitch plateau, it has nowhere else to go. Refn, for all the extravagant machismo and technical ingenuity of the film's direction, shoots himself into a corner.

But even then, that virtuosity, allied to Cliff Martinez's glittering score, is the fuel that powers *Drive* beyond the head and straight into the gut. This is the singular vision of a director who proves himself an artisan of cinematic violence, one whose commitment to that vision will brook neither argument nor dissent. And at the last, the denouement returns to the film a serene sense of beauty paid for by the sacrifice that Driver makes in the waning sunlight and waxing shadows of LA.

Every good fairy tale involves a quest for something. Driver's is for purity and grace. Refn's is for redemption in the Hollywood system that nearly destroyed him. Both of them have found what they're looking for, even if it comes with strings attached. For audiences looking for an ice-cool, uncompromising and gut-wrenching pulp thriller, the search ends here

Anticipation. Released out of nowhere to huge acclaim at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, where Nicolas Winding Refn took the award for Best Director. **4**

Enjoyment. "I used to produce action movies. Sexy stuff. They called them 'European'. I woulda called them 'shit'." Not this one though, Bernie, not this one. **4**

In Retrospect. By no means perfect, although it's hard to process the flaws while your insides are singing and you can't catch your breath. **4**

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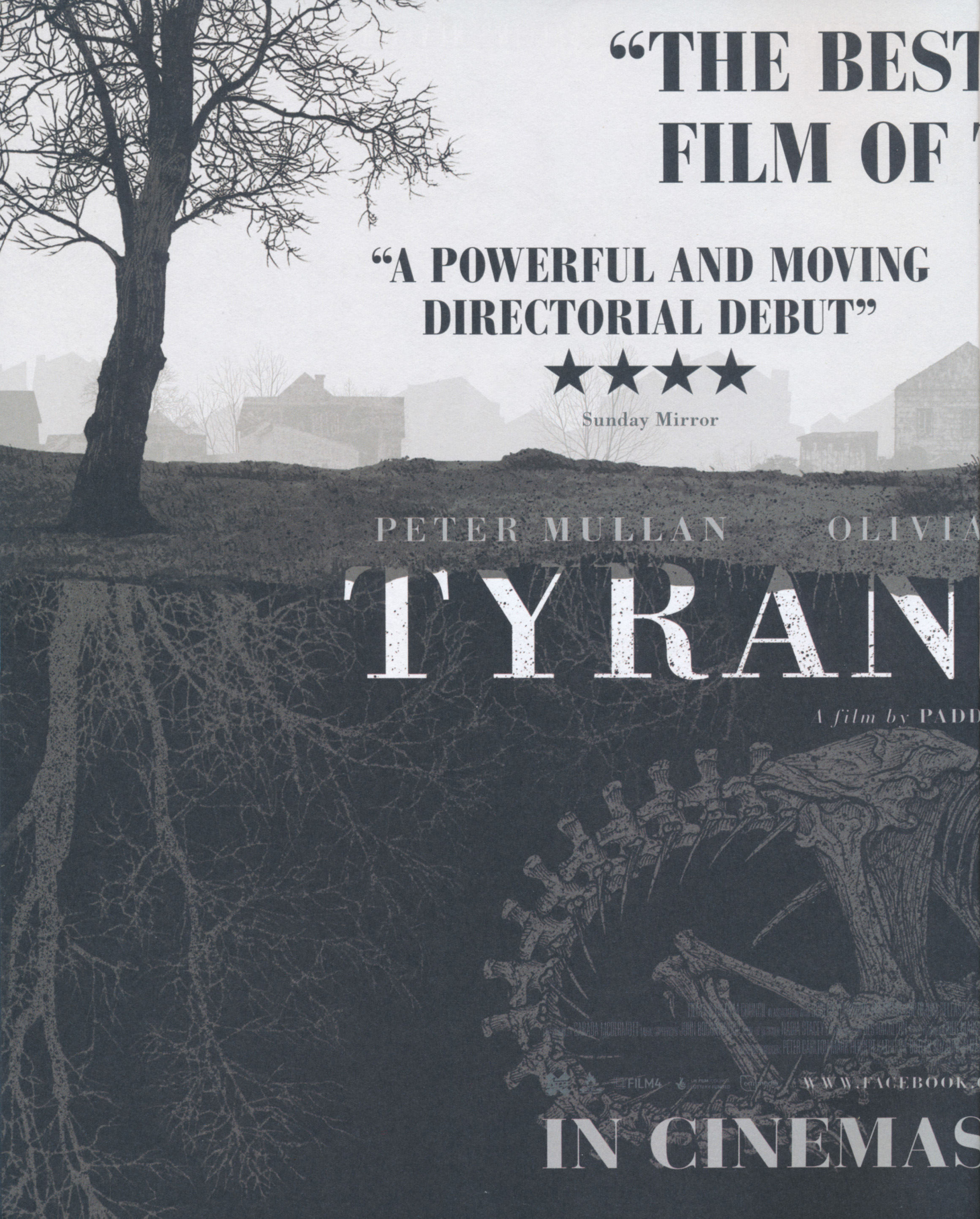

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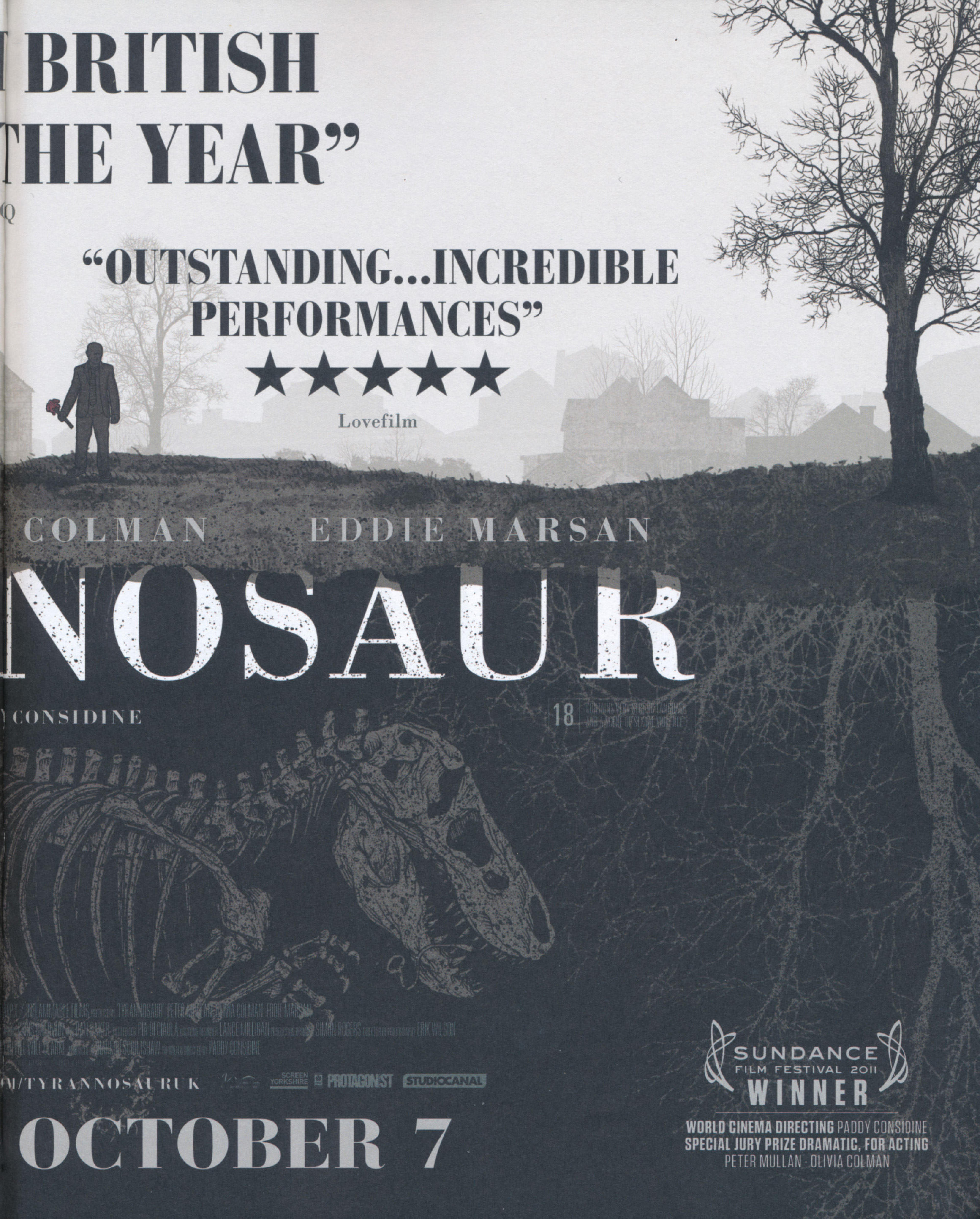
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Americans are broad-minded people. They'll accept the fact that a person can be an alcoholic, a dope fiend, a wife beater and even a newspaperman, but if a man doesn't drive, there is something wrong with him.

Art Buchwald, 1966

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IN WHICH WE INTRODUCE OURSELVES

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LWLies:
What do you love about movies?

Ryan Gosling:
I think... Well, for instance, when I was in fourth grade, maybe even... I forget what year it was, but it was sometime in junior school that I first saw *First Blood* and it kinda put me under a spell. I believed I was Rambo, and I filled my Fisher-Price Houdini Kit with steak knives and took it into school and tried throwing them at some of the kids during recess. I didn't hurt anybody, thank god, and I learned my lesson, you know, I'm sorry that I did it... But films have such a powerful effect on me, they always have done. I've tried to control that, but I don't think I've ever really managed to.

Nicolas Winding Refn:
Um... I think the best way for me to answer that is to say I can't answer that because... It's easier for me to answer what I *don't* like about movies. And for me to answer that is just to say... Nothing.

Honest, passionate and unmerciful

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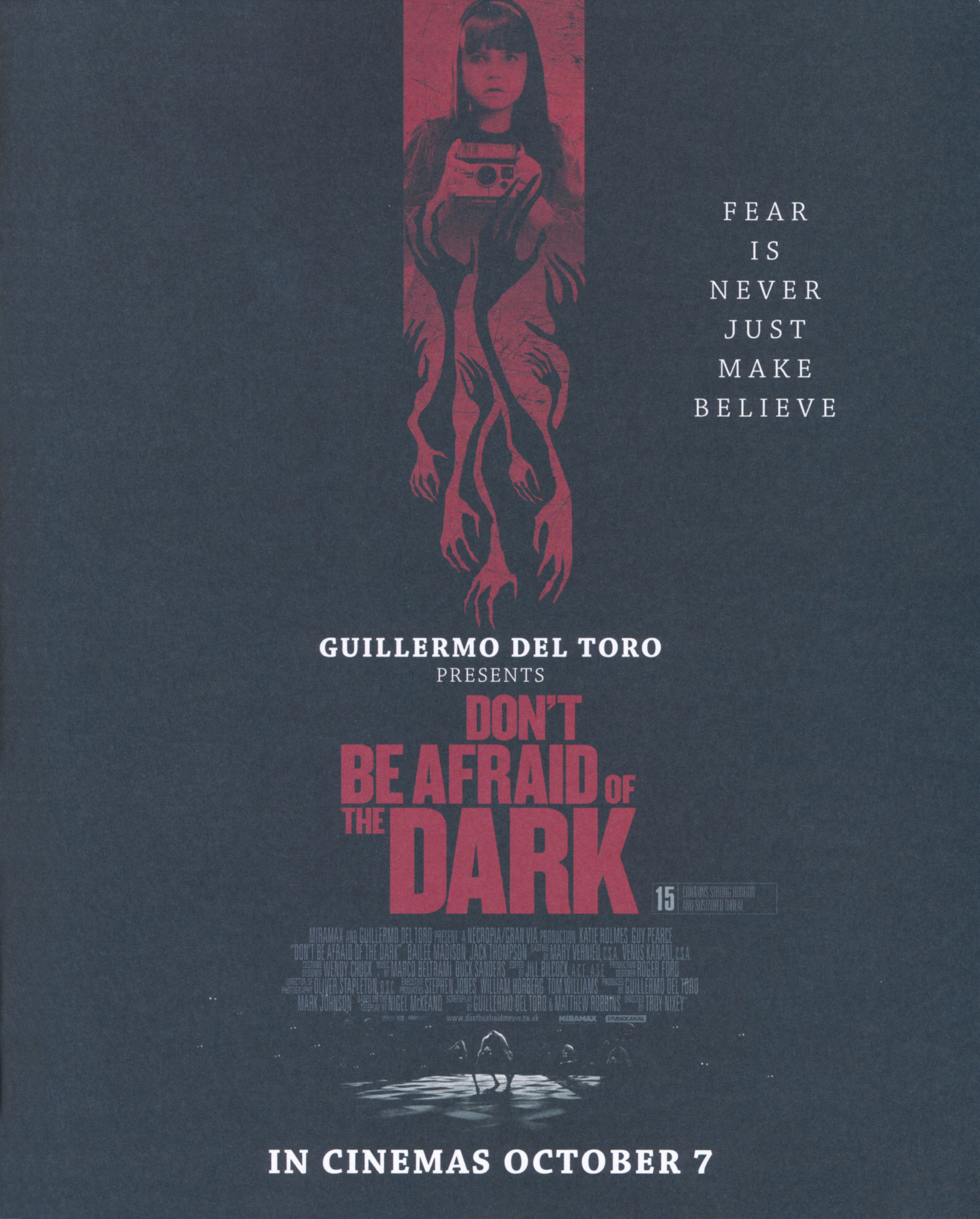

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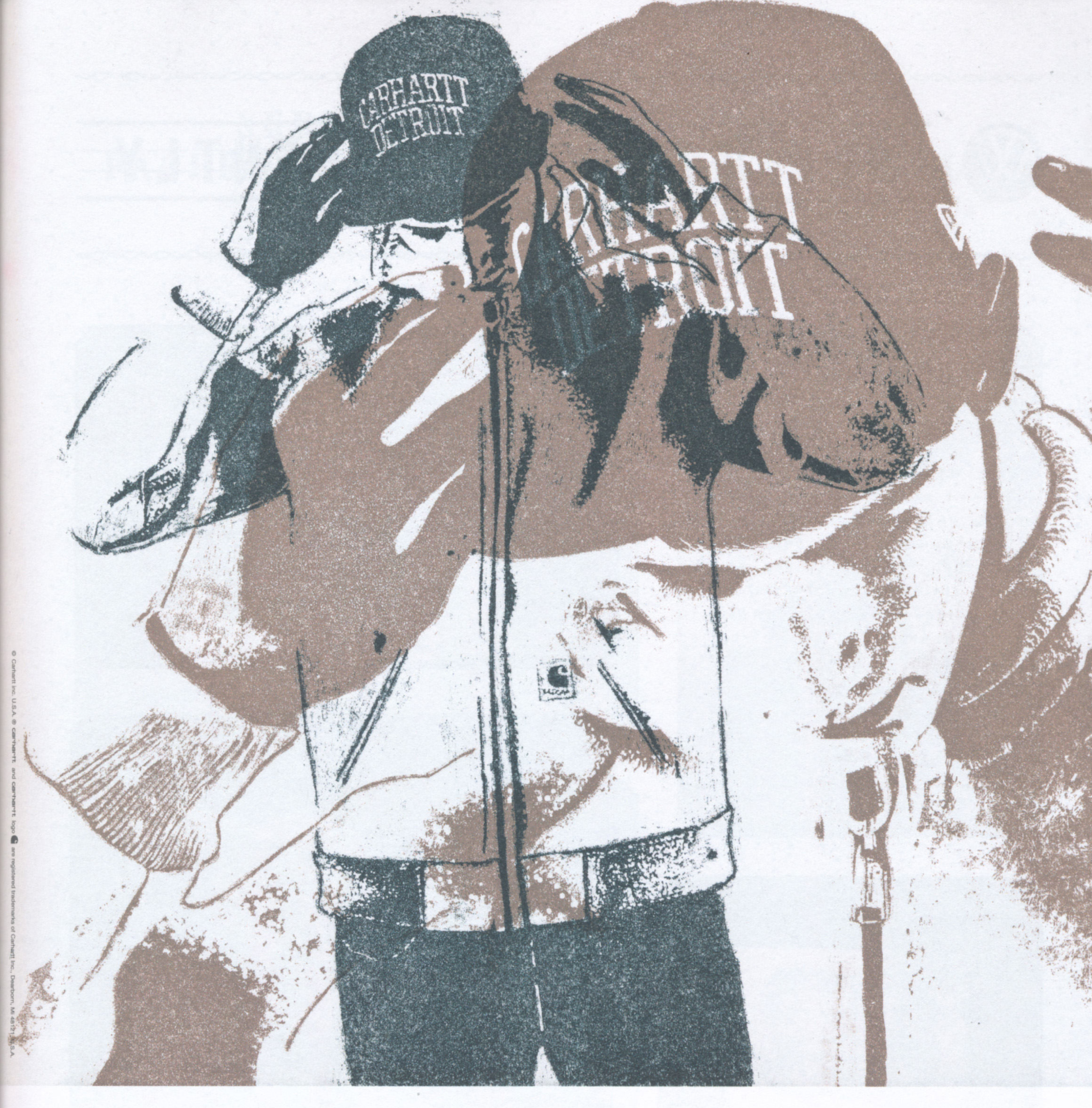
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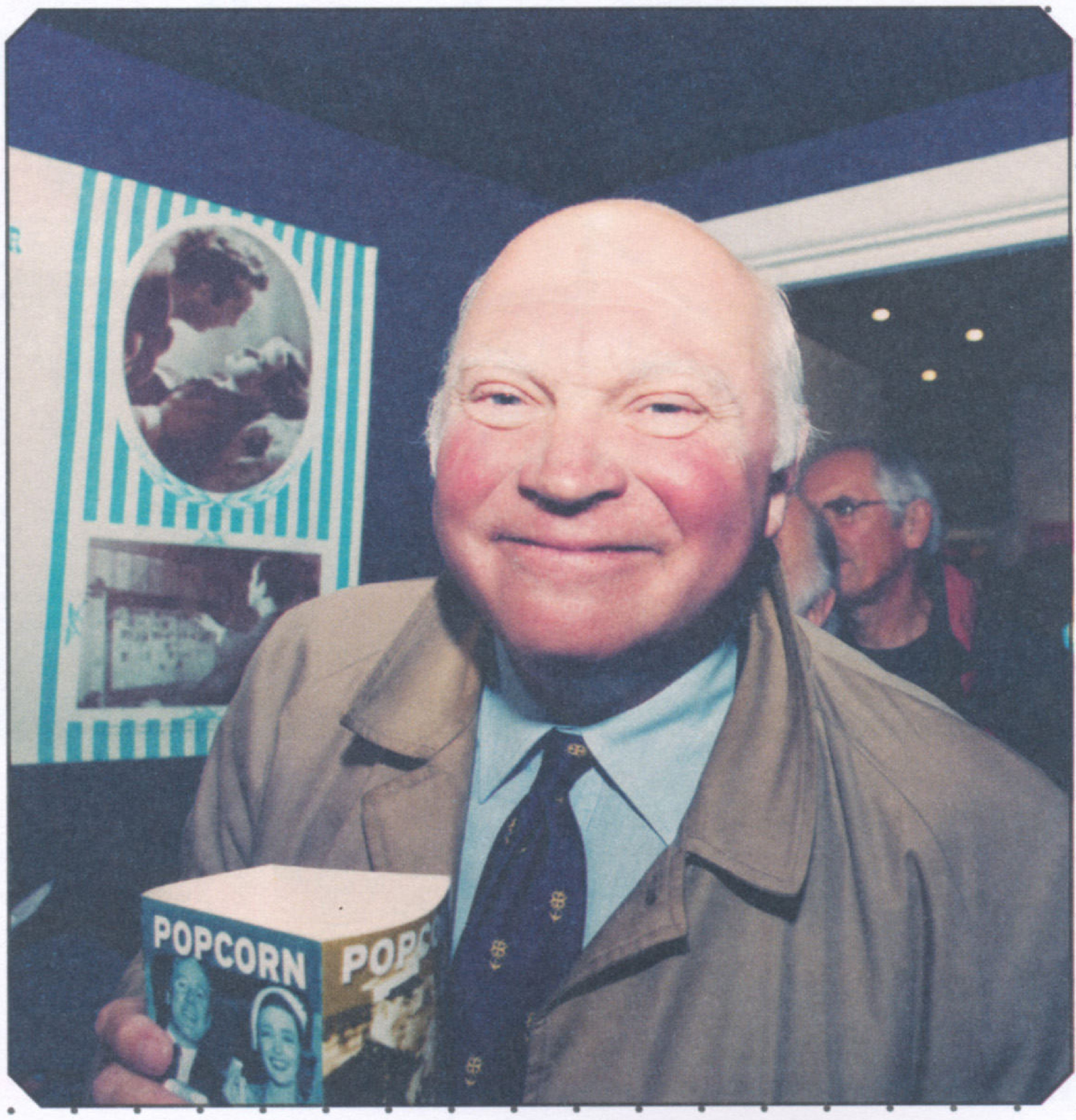

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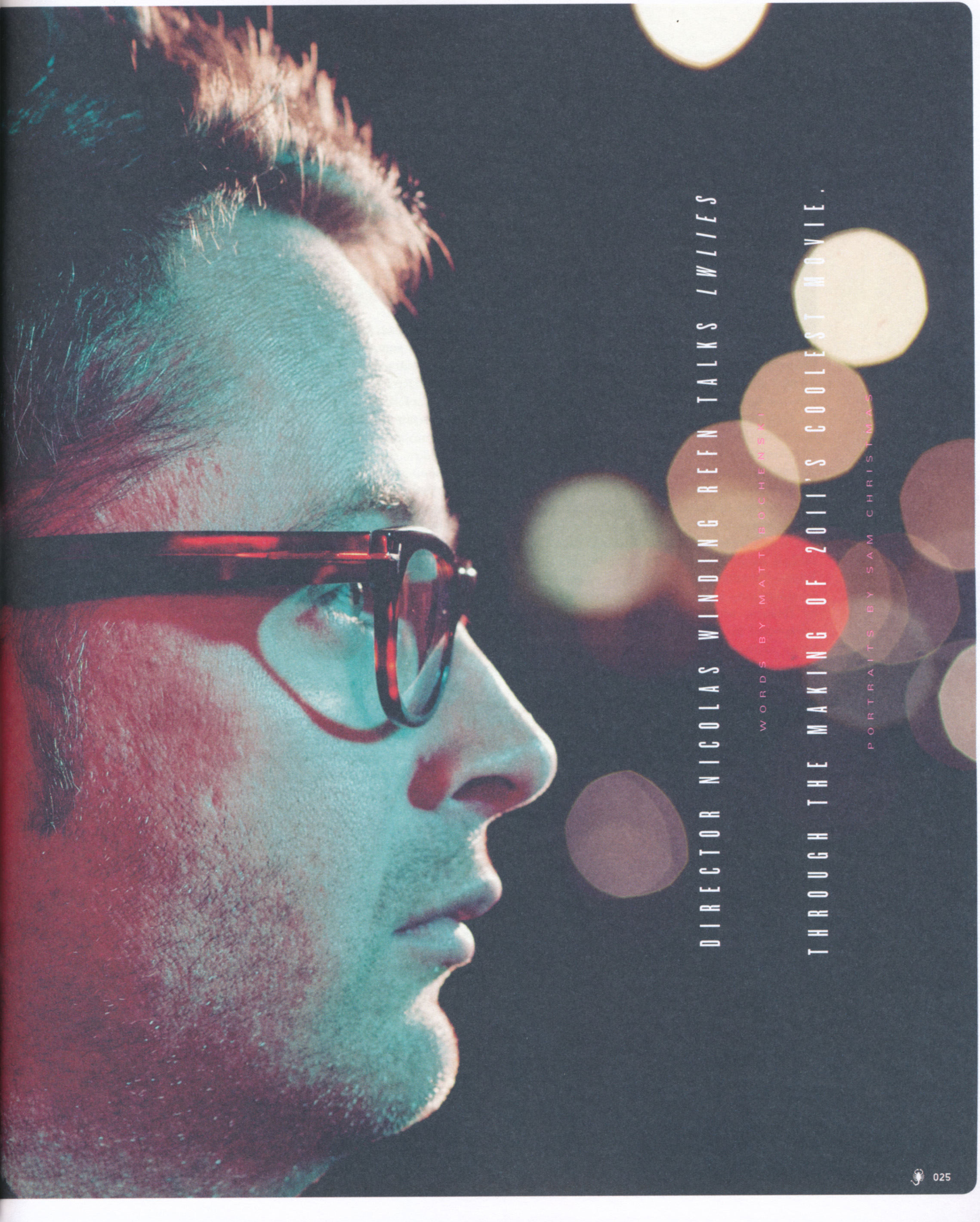


DIRECTOR NICOLAS WINDING REFN TALKS *LWLIES* THROUGH THE MAKING OF 2011'S COOLEST MOVIE.

WORDS BY MATT BOCHENSKI

PORTRAITS BY SAM CHRISTMAS

It raised eyebrows. In amongst the auteur royalty jostling for position at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, one director stood out. Sitting conspicuously amongst the usual suspects – Almodóvar, the Dardenne brothers, Takashi Miike, Lars von Trier – was Nicolas Winding Refn, the Danish punk who'd earned comparisons to Scorsese at the age of 26 after his debut, *Pusher*, lit up the mean streets of Copenhagen.

That early success put Refn in Hollywood's crosshairs. He rocked up to LA in 2003 to make *Fear X* with John Turturro, only to get spat out of the system, a million dollars in the hole. A couple of *Pusher* sequels followed, but by 2007 the 'new Scorsese' was turning in a director-for-hire gig on a *Miss Marple* TV movie.

"I had to say, 'Let's start over'," Refn told *LWLies* in 2009, after the release of *Valhalla Rising*. By then, he was back on-track, his rehabilitation kick-started the previous year by *Bronson,* which was as explosive as it was unexpected in 2008. He'd had a kid, refocused, let go of the rage that had consumed him as a younger man. "I was more aggressive and nihilistic then," he confessed. "I thought art had to destroy everything around it."

* * *

It had been a hard road to the gilded boulevard of the Croisette, but at Cannes it was Refn, now 41-years-old, who ascended the steps ahead of his fellow filmmakers to receive the Best Director award. Based on a book no one had read, starring an actor who seemed destined to be eclipsed by his peers, and channelling a vibe of neon-noir existentialism that was equal parts Steve McQueen, Michael Mann and video nasty, *Drive* hit audiences like a blunt trauma to the head.

With Ryan Gosling as a taciturn stuntman who moonlights as a freelance getaway driver; Carey Mulligan as his love interest; Albert Brooks as a reluctant mobster; Ron Perlman as his violent partner; and Christina Hendricks as a double-crossing moll, *Drive* is steeped in blood, motor oil and mythology.

It takes its place as an archetypal LA thriller, and yet there's something subversive in the way Refn stitches it all together. This is a film of smooth artifice and deep currents. It's also a film with another kind of LA story to tell – the kind that LA likes best: one about itself.

* * *

Today, two months after that Cannes triumph, Refn is retelling that story. He's sitting, appropriately, in a small, cramped library lit by the pink neon light of a photographer's lamp. He's recalling the extraordinary series of events that led to his involvement in the movie.

"The book was optioned by Universal six or seven years ago," he begins. "I think they only ever read the reviews, because how a studio would invest in a book like that is a big puzzle to me. They were gonna develop it for Hugh Jackman as a $60 million franchise in the vein of *The Fast and the Furious*. I guess they then read the book. I don't know whether they had a heart attack but they hired Hossein Amini to develop it into a movie that would justify a $60 million dollar Hugh Jackman franchise rip-off. You can only do that if you basically take the title and some of the characters and make a whole new story."

Unsurprisingly, the Hugh Jackman version never got off the ground, but Amini kept working on the script, trying to shape James Sallis' 160-page novel into something that could work on screen. Finally, Ryan Gosling heard about it, loved it and came on board, but with one condition – he could choose the director. Though Gosling is hardly an A-list heavyweight, having made his name as a determinedly low-key indie actor in the likes of *Half*

Nelson, *Lars and the Real Girl* and *Blue Valentine*, the studio agreed to his demand.

* * *

Coincidentally, Refn was in LA at the time prepping doomed Harrison Ford spy drama *The Dying of the Light*. Pissed off with the situation ("You see how good things get destroyed quickly"), he agreed to meet with Gosling. A couple of days later, Refn was heading out to dinner, suffering from a fever and dosed up to the eyeballs on American flu drugs – "which is basically like shooting morphine."

He hadn't read the book, just thumbed through the script, although that was a waste of time because he was too fucked up to remember the details. The meeting was a disaster. "I couldn't look at him because of the way we were seated in the restaurant, so it was very odd, almost like a blind date situation. We didn't really talk a lot because I was so out of it. It was really weird – a lot of pauses. Eventually we had nothing left to say and I ended up asking if he could drive me home."

Interlude: Nicolas Winding Refn, award-winning director of Drive*, can't actually use a car. What the fuck? "I failed my test eight times. I will never drive. I wasn't meant to drive. That was one of the great things about making this film – learning about the emotional relationship between a man and his car, and imagining myself in this totally alien situation. Hos doesn't drive either. We were both just stranded in Los Angeles thinking, 'Hmm, how do we make a movie about driving when neither of us knows how to drive?'"*

So anyway, back to that night. Refn asks Gosling to drive him home and the two of them get in the car like sullen first-daters who know they've flamed out. It's depressing and awkward so Gosling puts the radio on to crowd out the deafening silence. REO Speedwagon's 'Can't Fight This Feeling' washes over them.

"For some strange reason that song does something to me," says Refn, "and you know when you have a fever, your emotions are heightened so I start singing. I've never done that in front of other people, but I was really singing at the top of my lungs and getting into it, and Ryan was just sitting there thinking, 'How the hell do I get this guy out of here?' I turned to him for the first time and just screamed in his face. By this point I'd turned the music up so loud that you couldn't do anything but scream, and I really yelled in his face. I got it. In that moment, I knew what *Drive* was: a movie about a man who drives around at night listening to pop music because that's his emotional release. And that's how the movie was born. My movie."

Inspired, Refn flew to London to hook up with Amini, persuading him to come out to Hollywood and collaborate on a new script, one that returned to the mood and atmosphere of the novel. Back in LA, Refn, Amini and Gosling spent the next few months cruising around the city at night, talking, playing music and hanging out at 24-hour cafes before heading home when the sun came up to continue writing.

* * *

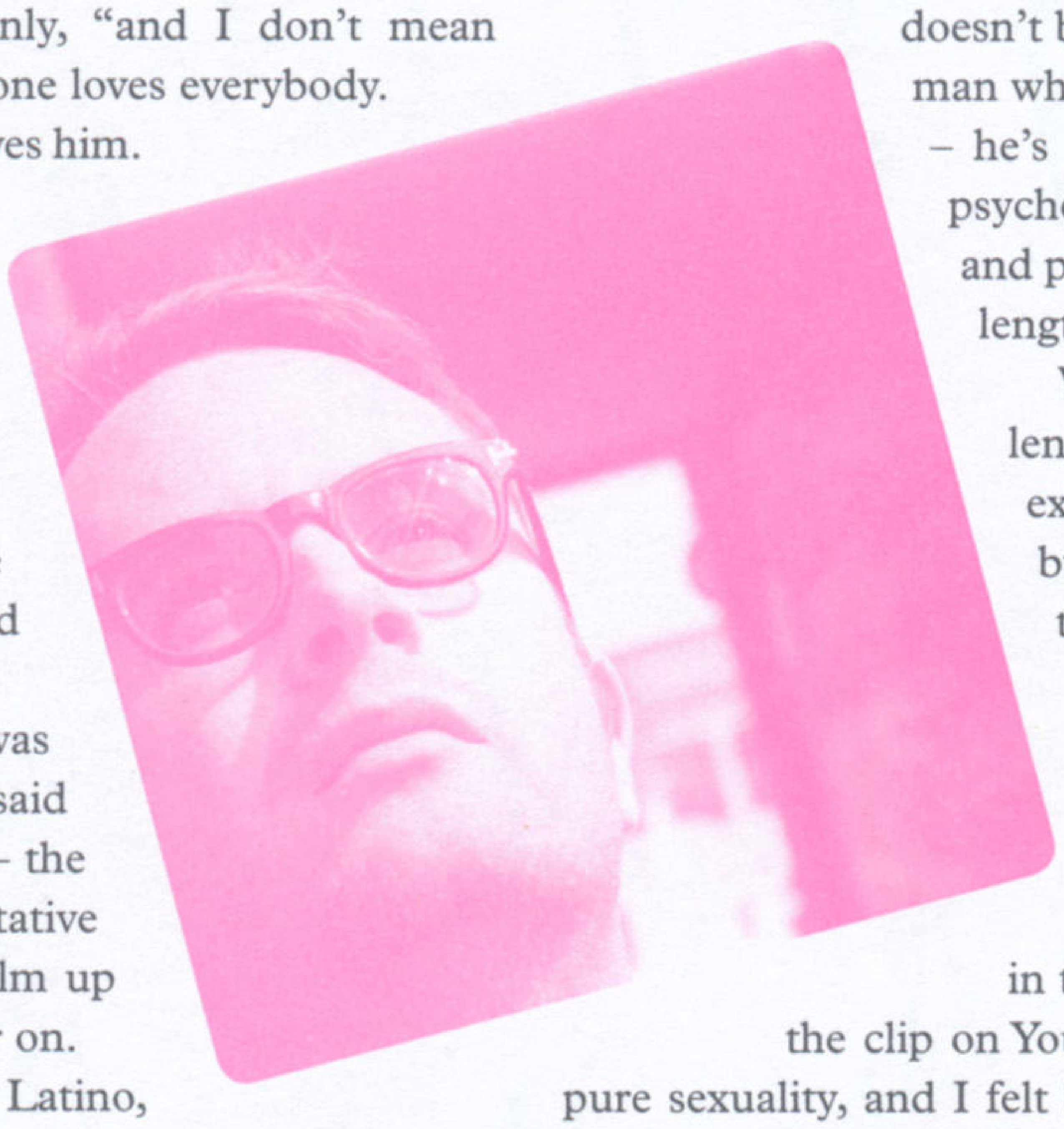
Although Amini would take sole credit for the final script, Gosling was crucial to the process – not just because he was the only one of the three who could get behind a wheel, but because he had the clout to protect and support the film's best interests against studio interference.

"It's a similar situation to when Steve McQueen wanted to do *Bullitt* with Peter Yates, who at the time was an unknown British director who'd only done one movie," says Refn. "Or when Lee Marvin wanted to do *Point Blank*, but only with John Boorman who, again, had only done a handful of small British films. He insisted on bringing him to America and protecting him and giving him the freedom to make *Point Blank* the way it turned out. That film wouldn't be what it is had it not been for Lee Marvin. It was the same situation

"I LOVE RYAN GOSLING, AND I DON'T MEAN IN THE HOLLYWOOD WAY. I REALLY LOVE HIM."

here: Ryan protected me and that allowed me to make the movie I wanted to make."

But the relationship between them went further. "Ryan would come over a lot and hang out," recalls Refn. "It became a very collaborative, communal environment, almost like a '70s movie or something, where we'd spend days in each other's company. All that was missing were the drugs… I love him," he continues suddenly, "and I don't mean in the Hollywood way where everyone loves everybody. I mean I *really* love him. My wife loves him. He loves my wife. I love his mother. We're very similar in many aspects of our sensibilities – we have different upbringings but we gravitate towards the same things. He gave me the opportunity to make a film in Hollywood the way I wanted, which probably would never have happened otherwise."



If Gosling's presence was preordained, the same can't be said for *Drive*'s other key role of Irene – the troubled girl next door whose tentative relationship with Driver sets the film up for a radical shift into violence later on.

In the book, Irene is a tough Latino, but Refn finally landed on English rose Carey Mulligan after a casting call straight out of the Josef von Stroheim handbook. "For me to do a movie in Hollywood, I wanted to live the Hollywood mythology; I wanted to live in a huge house with a swimming pool and an orange tree and hordes of assistants," says Refn. "So everybody who wanted to be in the movie had to come to the house and pitch face-to-face.

"For some reason, when it came to casting Irene I just couldn't make up my mind. Even though we had all these great actresses, there was always something that felt wrong. Then out of the blue I got a call saying that Carey Mulligan would love to meet – she was in LA and was interested in the character, which I thought was a little weird. I hadn't seen *An Education*, but my wife and mother had both seen it and said it was very good. She came to the house and the minute she walked through the door I *knew* it was her. She was the missing link."

The shoot itself was, by the director's own admission, less dogmatic than usual. Money issues meant that he couldn't shoot the action chronologically, but rather than feeling constrained by the budget, Refn acknowledges that it made him more creative. "I had this idea to shoot it like a fairy tale, with that archetype of the knight who roams the wasteland in search of a woman to save," he reveals. "Driver almost doesn't belong in our time anymore. He's a man who has difficulty dealing with reality – he's essentially psychotic but he's not psychopathic. He has a lot of empathy and purity, but he's willing to go to great lengths to protect what is pure."

When it came to depicting those lengths, "I wanted to make it as explicit as possible," Refn admits, but it was the car sequences, rather than the violence, that really caught his imagination. "I watched a lot of car scenes, but the one that really struck me was the Claude Lelouch short film where he just drives around Paris at five in the morning," he says (you can see the clip on YouTube). "It's just pure adrenaline, pure sexuality, and I felt like I needed to channel this pure sex without the flash of the cars or the conventions of the car chase. So many car chases are shot on $200 million budgets, and I wasn't even going to start competing in that arena. Why even try? Why not do something totally original and sexy?"

For all that Refn has made a modern fairy tale set in the City of Angels, he has no illusions about LA. After his experience with *Fear X*, he approached the city with greater self-awareness, and a degree more cynicism. "I became this manipulative character to get my film made," he says without apology. "Coming to Hollywood, you're always on guard because you hear all these terrible stories of how it chews people out, so you've always got your thumb over the alert button. But the circumstances here led to me having what I'd call a first-class Hollywood experience."

Even so, for all that Refn likes to be taken out of his comfort zone, it's with some finality that he declares: "I will never live in Los Angeles."

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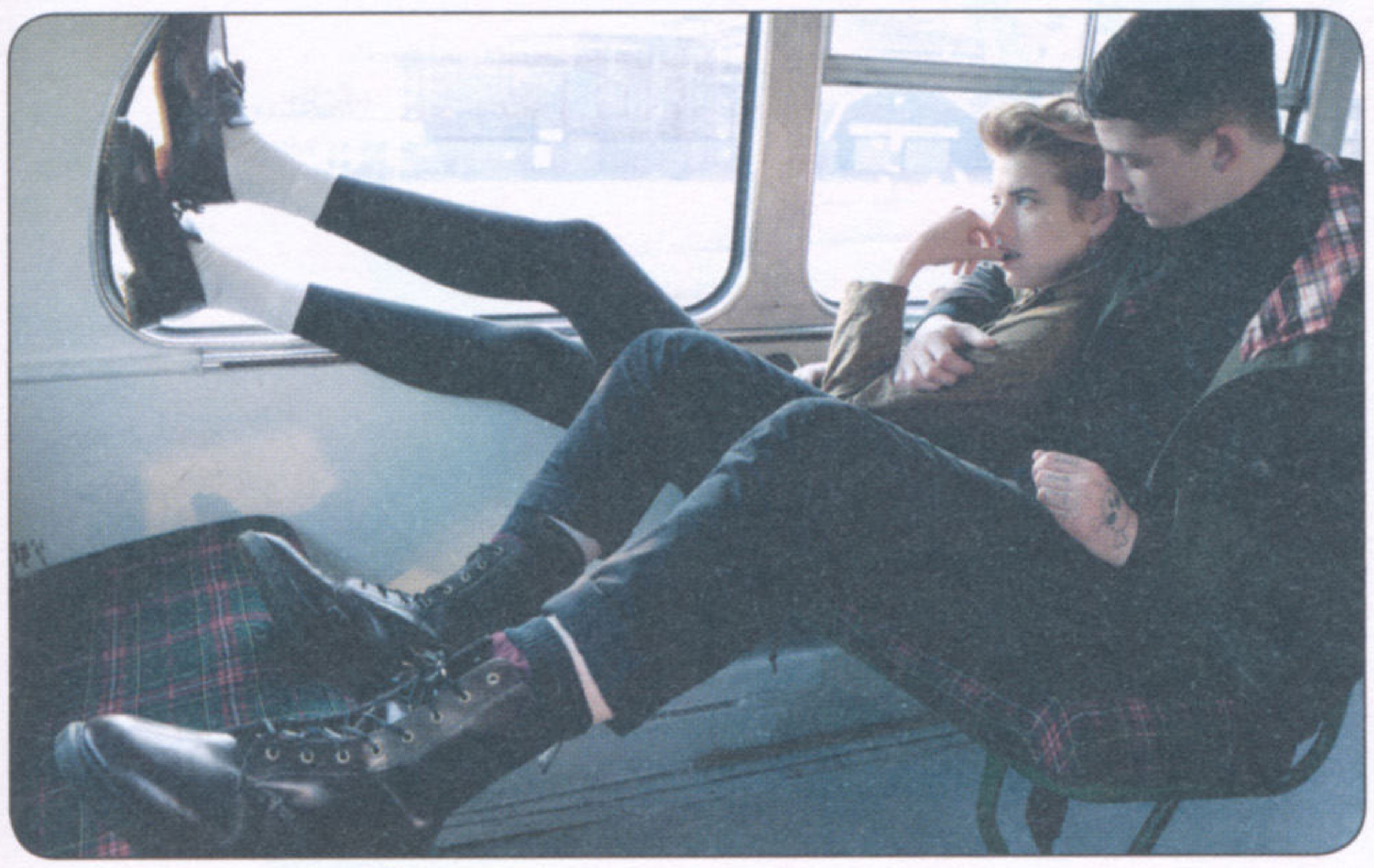

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This exclusive screening, produced by elevenfiftyfive, will take place at the Classic Car Club in East London, where you'll be able to take in the sights of iconic muscle cars and the smell of motor oil for the ultimate *Drive* experience.

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DRIVE AUTHOR JAMES SALLIS STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE WHEEL.

WORDS BY MATT BOCHENSKI

James Sallis is whiskey and cigarettes; freeways and motor oil. He *is* America – it's ingrained in his work like dirt under the fingernails.

His prose is terse and raw with an irresistible gravity that pulls your eyes down the page. Put his books aside for a day, and you half expect them to come back with stubble.

His most famous creation is New Orleans detective Lew Griffin. Through Griffin, Sallis navigated the clichés of the crime genre, interested less in plot and narrative, and placing more emphasis on the structure and artifice of composition itself.

A successful poet, essayist and musician, Sallis moves easily through forms, taking with him a committed fan base now vastly expanded with the decades-in-the-making overnight success that has recently come his way.

LWLies tracked him down to interrogate the mind behind *Drive*.

LWLIES: The very tightly controlled, down to earth focus of your noir novels is a world away from the expansive trappings of science-fiction, where you made your name as the editor of *New Worlds* magazine in London. Why do you think it was sci-fi that originally caught your imagination, and how did you make the transition towards crime and noir?

SALLIS: Long before the science-fiction, I was writing and publishing poetry, and science-fiction seemed to me to offer much the same sense of revelation, of suddenly confronting my world anew, as did poetry. I was also reading mysteries – Hemingway, Faulkner, John O'Hara, John Updike – indiscriminately, as I still read, one book lit off the smouldering butt of the last. Generally I speak of science-fiction and fantasy, along with surrealism, magic realism and the rest of that mixed bag, as 'arealist'. For me, both as reader and as writer, arealist fiction and crime fiction are connected to deep places within us: archetypes, primal images, fears, forms. They issue from the same pool as our enduring myths.

LWLIES: Is genre an unhelpful idea in that respect, in that it suggests rules, limits, norms and expectations?

SALLIS: Genre isn't necessarily proscriptive. Like style, at its deepest level it's more about the way in which the writer connects with his or her world. Science-fiction draws back from the frame in which mankind is pictured, and shows us the surround of that frame. Classically, noir is tragedy for everyman. Nor is crime fiction ever far away from the sense that America murdered itself into democracy.

> "IT'S A MYTH ITSELF, ISN'T IT, LA? IT'S LARGER THAN LIFE, FOREVER, IN A SENSE, UNREAL – FINALLY UNKNOWABLE."

LWLIES: Your work as a respiratory therapist must put you in the midst of some very painful human dramas and tragedies. As a writer, does exposing yourself to that kind of situation in some sense make you a better or more honest observer of life?

SALLIS: Hospital work took me out of my own head and to a place where people had real problems. Daily, often with me in attendance, people suffered horribly and died. It gave me an interesting perspective. Sometimes I feel that it has in some manner exempted me from more common feelings about marginality, pain and death.

LWLIES: You've been honest about the 'bad choices' you've made in the past – in terms of your marriage and dealing with alcoholism. Does being a writer in some way validate or at least make sense of those choices if it ultimately enriches your work?

SALLIS: We so often talk about our lives enriching our work, and not often enough, perhaps, about the work enriching our lives. We don't have a map; we're all just trying to get through this, find the next turn, the next corridor, maybe a small door, or a window to look out. We get lost a lot. And sometimes, for a moment, for years, for a lifetime, we just give up. Art doesn't justify or validate anything, and it makes sense of very little. Art is play – a truth we forget all too often.

LWLIES: What do you make of the relationship between Hollywood and the crime novel – is it mutually beneficial or in some sense destructive?

SALLIS: Our imaginations have been colonised. We've seen hundreds of movies, hundreds of TV shows, so when we think we're being creative, we may just be dipping into the cliché bucket. I tell my students, 'Reject the first thing that comes to mind, because that will be something you've scavenged from another's nest. Peel it back. Then peel it back again.'

LWLIES: Your novels are peculiarly honest about the artifice of being a novel, something that Refn captured very well on screen. Is it something you guys spoke about?

SALLIS: It's something Nic sensed – part of what attracted him to the book in the first place. After seeing *Drive*, I told my agent, 'This is the movie I would have made had I been a filmmaker, with those tools, instead of a novelist, with my own.' Nic found visual equivalents and reimagined my book as a film, with film's particular rhythms and vocabulary. It's quite stunning.

LWLIES: You've also both talked about the destructive implications of art. You once said that art 'has to hurt'.

SALLIS: Did I say that? We're still burning the wax from Romanticism's jar? Definitely you must push yourself: through walls, into other minds and ways of being, towards darkness. [As German poet] Paul Celan wrote: 'There was dirt inside them/And they dug.'

LWLIES: LA plays a key role in *Drive*, indeed, it's often worked better as a location in crime novels than it has in cinema. What did you find in LA when you were preparing to write *Drive* that inspired you? What was it about the city that you knew you needed to capture?

SALLIS: It's a myth itself, isn't it, LA? Promised Land, Last Frontier, America Manifest. It's larger than life, forever, in a sense, unreal – finally unknowable. The city itself is like one of those roles we create for ourselves; then try to live into. I think that's what I worked to capture, just as Driver was in many ways my image of the last frontiersman

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THE TEETH INSIDE THEIR SMILES WHITE AS BEACONS.

PLENTY OF TIME TO CONSIDER THE DIMENSIONS
OF YOUR LOSS, HOW IT MIGHT BE LISTED
ON MANIFESTS. STILL, WHAT YOU HAVE LEFT
IS BETTER THAN YOU DESERVE, AND SUFFICIENT,
IF ONE HOLDS ON HARD ENOUGH, TO KEEP YOU AFLOAT.

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AND WIDENS. ONCE AGAIN AS YOU WATCH, LIGHT,
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MEMORY

IN WHAT CORNER OF MORNING
DID YOU ENCOUNTER THAT HORROR
OF DAWN BREAKING ON THE PANES.

WHEN WALLS TURNED TO CHALK
AND LIGHTS CAME YELLOW BEHIND WINDOWS.

WHAT WAS IT YOU BENT TO PICK
UP FROM THE WALK AND THE SEA
A SHELL LAMENTING SOME USED-UP LIFE.

Hell Drivers

WORDS BY JAMES WRIGHT

BEHIND THE SLICK CGI APPLIED BY THE HOLLYWOOD MACHINE, A NOBLE, CRUDE AND DEATH-DEFYING PROFESSION STILL EXITS, FORGED OUT OF BLOOD, SWEAT AND BEATEN SCRAP METAL. *LWLIES* GOES IN SEARCH OF THE STUNT DRIVER.

In the early days of the twentieth century, there was no such thing as a stunt driver; there were only 'hell drivers'. The name, coined by Earl 'Lucky' Teter, was used to describe the men and women who travelled the length and breadth of the US performing automobile stunts at state and county fairs. The shows would consistently pull in massive audiences baying for gruesome crashes, flaming barricades and death-defying ramp-to-ramp jumps.

As audiences grew accustomed to ever more dangerous stunts and bigger explosions, soon enough they wanted to see them in films – and the hell driver was transformed into the stunt driver. Sure, stunt men were nothing new – they had existed in films for years – but anyone can run into a wall or set themselves alight; it takes precision accuracy to jump a gorge or flip a car.

* * *

Arguably the greatest hell driver to make the leap into film was Carey Loftin. Over a career that spanned hundreds of Hollywood productions, Loftin crafted some of the most outrageous driving stunt sequences in film history. *Thunder Road*, *Bullitt*, *The French Connection*, *Vanishing Point*, *Duel*, *Days of Thunder* – all Loftin, all incredible pieces of driving.

He became a member of a travelling motorcycle stunt show aged just 19, after challenging another well-known hell driver, Skip Fordyce, at a show in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, in the early '30s. Loftin, who had been sitting in the audience, claimed he could do anything that Fordyce could do. "Show me," said the older man. According to onlookers, Loftin launched himself off a speeding bike into the air, doing a 360-degree flip and landing with his feet on the ground behind the machine. Holding on to the rear seat with his hands, he steered the bike by digging his feet in the ground before snapping forward over the rear wheel and onto the seat, whereupon he executed a perfect stop in front of Fordyce. He was hired on the spot.

Loftin's career changed direction in the late '30s, when he landed a gig at Warner Bros while working in LA as a mechanic. "The first stunt I did at Warner Bros was a motorcycle wreck," Loftin recalled. "The tyres were supposed to shoot out from under me, so I jack-knifed it on this dusty road and took a big tumble. When they yelled, 'Cut!' I got up, dusted myself off and started walking away. Another stunt man, John Hudkins, took me by the arm, pulled me over and said, 'Son, you're never going to make any money in this business. Limp till you make a deal.' It was good advice and I took it."

Loftin was arguably one of the greatest stuntmen in the industry, but the business evolved rapidly. Perhaps the most famous car stunt of all time – James Bond's barrel roll in a stolen AMC Hornet X for 1974's *The Man with the Golden Gun* – would have been impossible at the start of Loftin's career.

It was conceived by Raymond McHenry of the Calspan Corporation at Cornell University as a way to validate his Highway Vehicle Object Simulation Model. The precise formula of speed and trajectory needed to execute the jump would have taken well over a year to figure out in the field, but McHenry's computer did it in 20 seconds. The stunt was first performed at the American Thrill Show, where it was witnessed by Bond producer Cubby Broccoli, who immediately insisted on using it in his next film.

* * *

"Yeah, that was an awesome stunt, but I think my favourite has to be the scene at the end of *Hooper* starring Burt Reynolds," says Darrin Prescott, stunt coordinator for *Drive*. "They blow up the town while driving a rocket-powered Pontiac Firebird over a 456-foot gap. It just amazed me. I must have been about eight-years-old when I saw it – my parents took me to the drive-in, and as soon as I saw that, all I wanted to do was ride motorcycles.

"I was just your average kid," Prescott continues, "I'd watch action films and jump bikes over stuff, and I suppose I kind of gravitated towards [being a stuntman]. The older I got, the more I studied it. I also went to see a lot of those travelling shows, but I was never really taken in by it all. I did do some live show stuff when I was coming up just to pay the bills, but I always wanted to be a Hollywood stuntman. As soon as I got out of high school, I made a bee-line for California."

Prescott made it to Hollywood in the mid-'90s, and although this was the era in which CGI started to re-write the rules, there were still plenty of opportunities. He got his break on 1994's *Holy Matrimony* ('A hilariously sexy comedy!' directed by Leonard Nimoy) and followed that up with work on the likes of *Barb Wire*, *Independence Day*, *G.I. Jane* and *Fight Club*. *Drive* sees Prescott taking the step up to second unit director, but it's the early days that have him reminiscing.

"Back when I was starting out, it was hard because it's such a competitive business," Prescott says. "Another stunt guy told me once that if I wanted to make it, I had to make myself as employable as possible and that suited my personality. I didn't have the focus to stick with one thing; if I wasn't riding my dirt bike, I'd want to be doing martial arts, and if I was doing that, I wanted to be on the trampoline. I made myself a jack-of-all-trades and a master of fuck all, which in the stunt business is a great trait to have because you need some knowledge of everything.

"There's obviously stunt schools people can attend for years but whenever I talk to young guys these days I always tell them that it's a lifestyle, it's a way you live. Most stunt schools are two to three weeks, but it's not like you can go to school for two weeks and now you're a top level stunt guy. It doesn't work like that. So I tell guys to avoid stunt schools and just go out and live it.

* * *

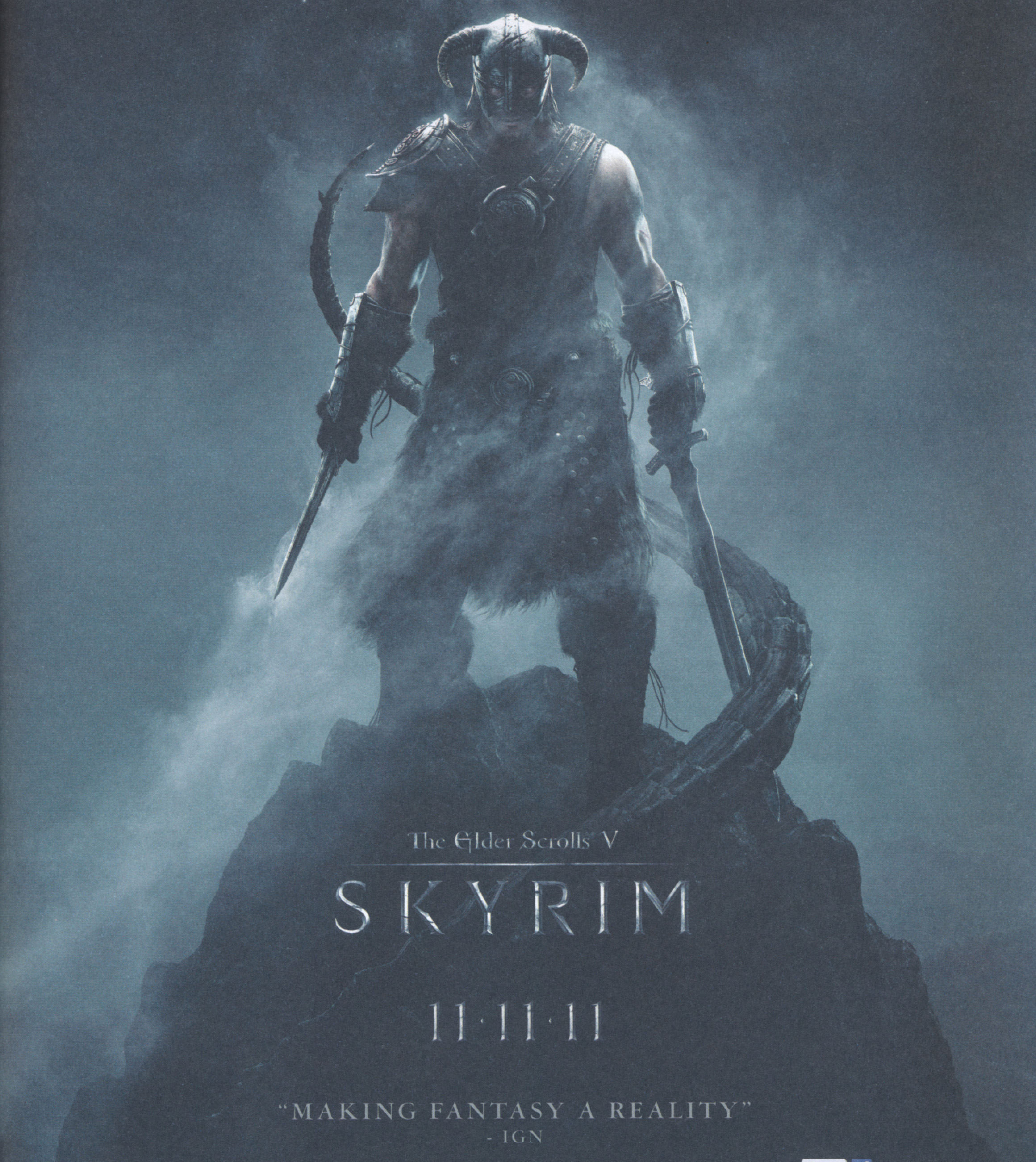
According to Prescott, one thing in the modern stuntman's favour is just how much safety has improved since the dark days of the '70s when "they'd cart guys off left and right. That whole planning side is really a big thing now," he says. "For every film I'll start out with the director in pre-production just to get a tone of the movie and find out what's interesting for him. I try to give them options, because sometimes they just don't know what's possible or what the limitation is. For film, it becomes a lot easier because you can usually afford wire removal, visual effects, all those options. But for *Drive* that really wasn't the case. On the one hand, Nic had a lot of creative license compared to, say, a big studio film where they'd just blanket the thing with CG and stunts, but subsequently there was very limited money.

"THE BEST CAR CRASHES COME OUT OF THINGS YOU DIDN'T EVEN EXPECT – AND THEY LOOK MORE ORGANIC FOR IT."

"On a big movie you can say, 'Okay, we need three weeks of rehearsal, an empty parking lot and 15 cars and we'll give you something great.' But in this day and age, where so much has been done on giant films, it's really challenging on a smaller film like *Drive* to give them something they've never seen before. That's where the chats between the director and me come in. There's one really cool over-the-shoulder shot during a crash in the film – we just did one test, and the test didn't go nearly the way that we wanted it to. But we had no more money to keep trying, so we had to just drop back and say, 'Okay, we all saw what happened, how can we fix this?' On the day, we just shot it and prayed.

"To be brutally honest, a lot of times the best car crashes come out of things you didn't even expect – and they look more organic for it," he admits. "With *The Bourne Ultimatum*, that crash at the end with the police car, that was definitely not how it was supposed to go but it looks phenomenal. *Drive* was the same. We all knew we'd have one hell of a wreck, but we just didn't know where it was going to go.

"It's such a gut-wrenching feeling right before you're ready to go. It's actually easier for me to go to work as a stuntman than the coordinator because I just have to flip the car over – I'm not responsible for anyone else but me. That's the thing: we eliminate as much danger as we can and we always try to make it as safe as possible for the team, but you just never know what will happen. I guess that's what makes the job so exhilarating and why we'll never really stop."



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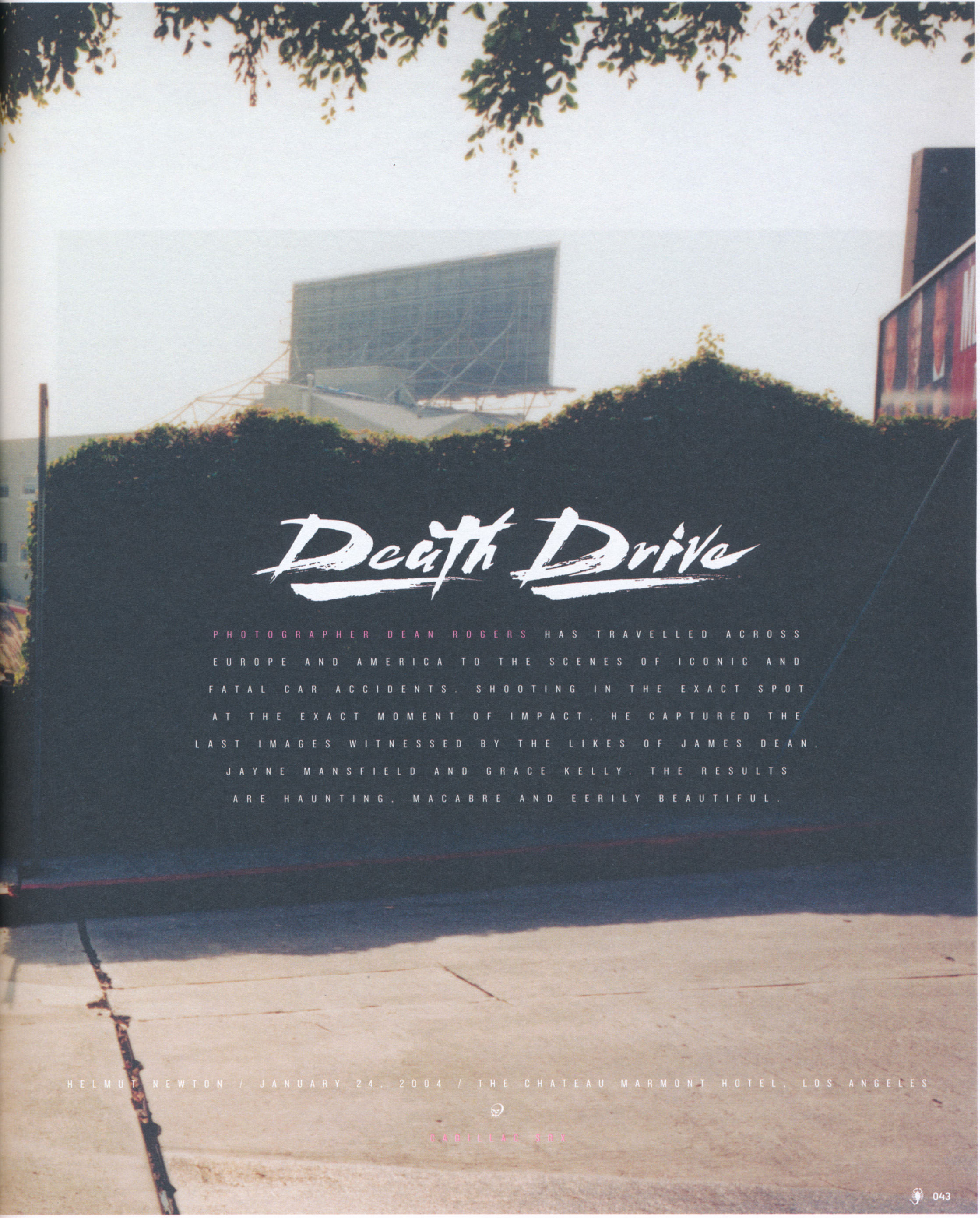

Death Drive

PHOTOGRAPHER DEAN ROGERS HAS TRAVELLED ACROSS EUROPE AND AMERICA TO THE SCENES OF ICONIC AND FATAL CAR ACCIDENTS. SHOOTING IN THE EXACT SPOT AT THE EXACT MOMENT OF IMPACT, HE CAPTURED THE LAST IMAGES WITNESSED BY THE LIKES OF JAMES DEAN, JAYNE MANSFIELD AND GRACE KELLY. THE RESULTS ARE HAUNTING, MACABRE AND EERILY BEAUTIFUL.

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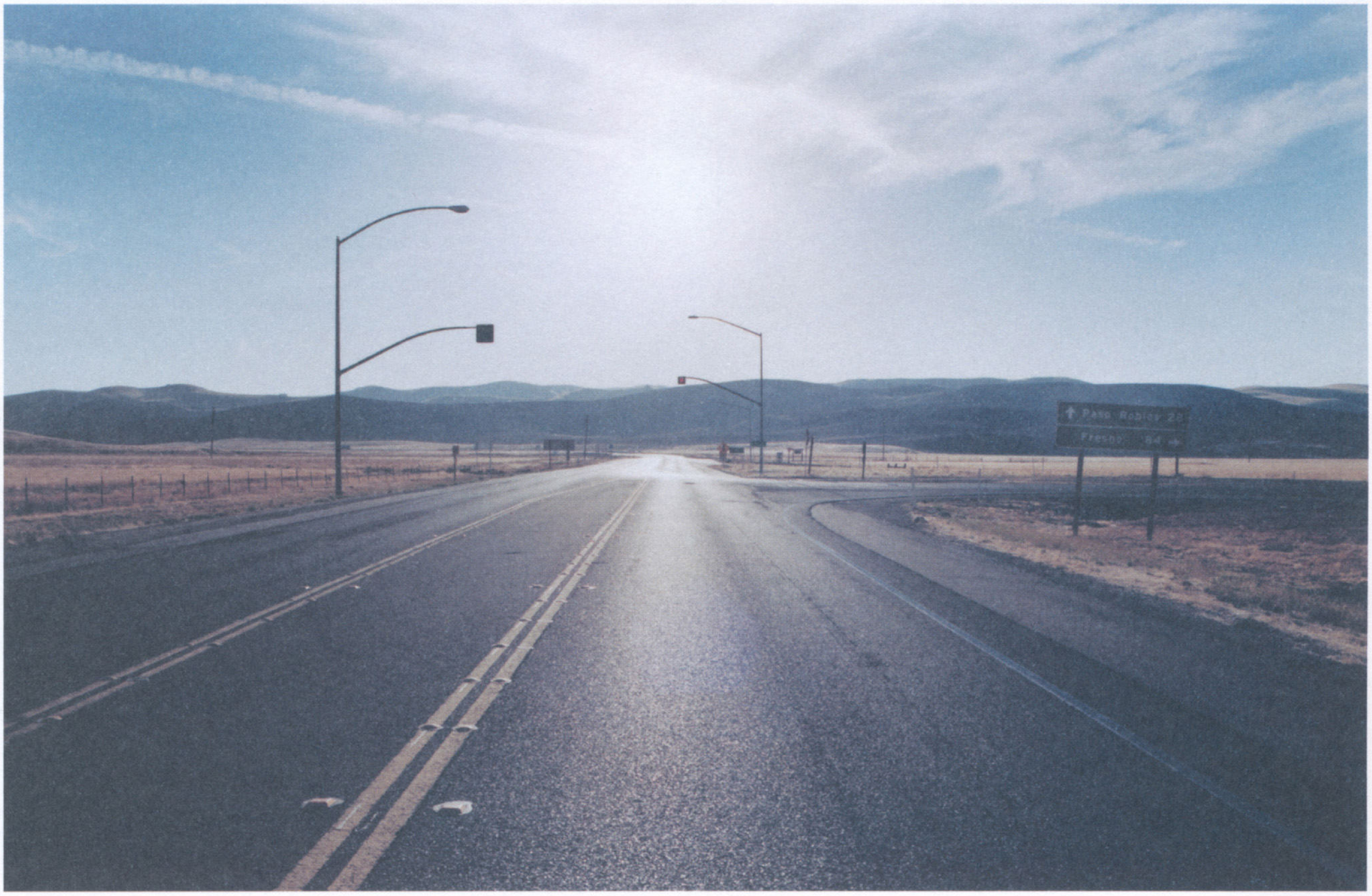
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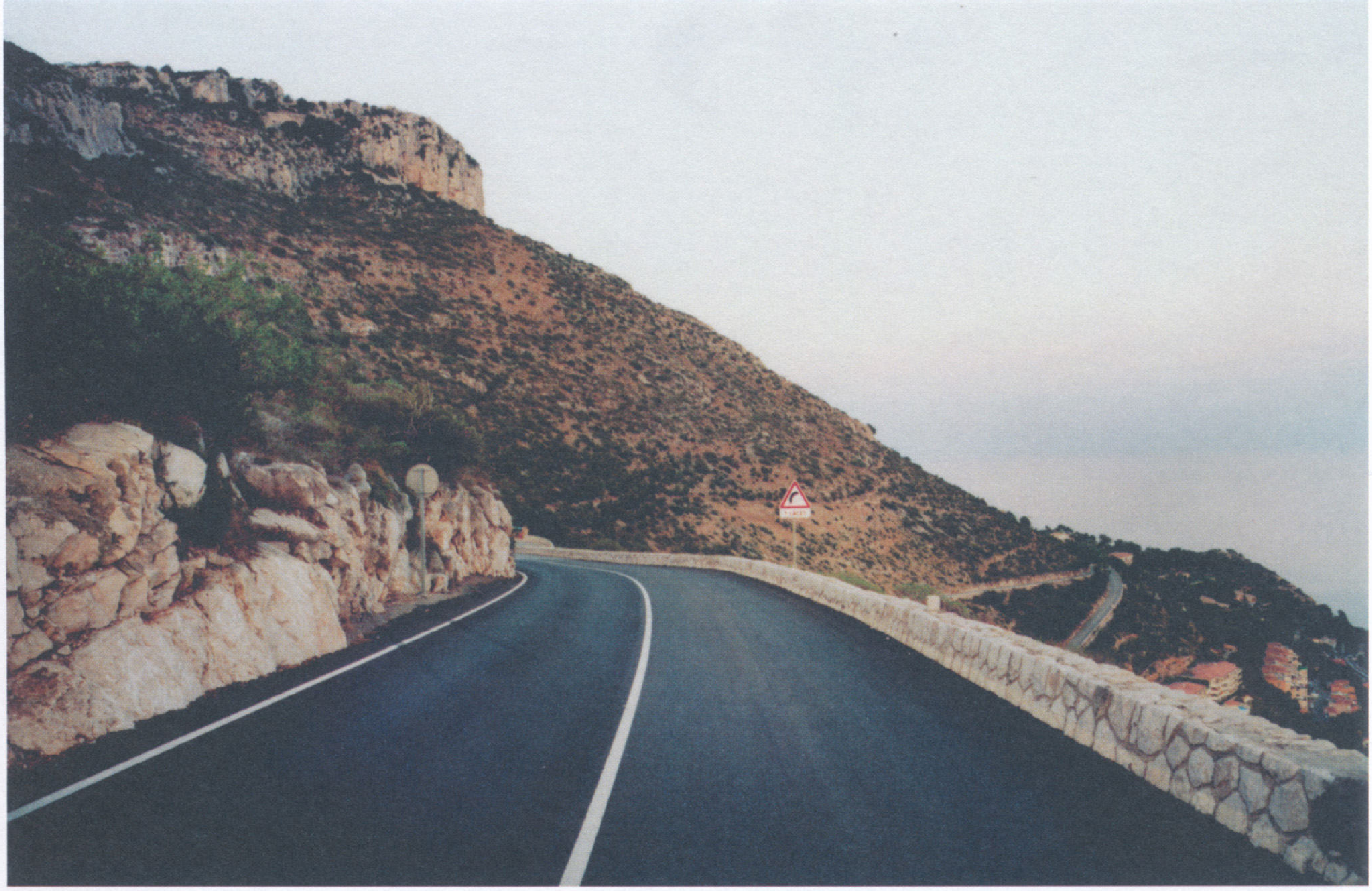

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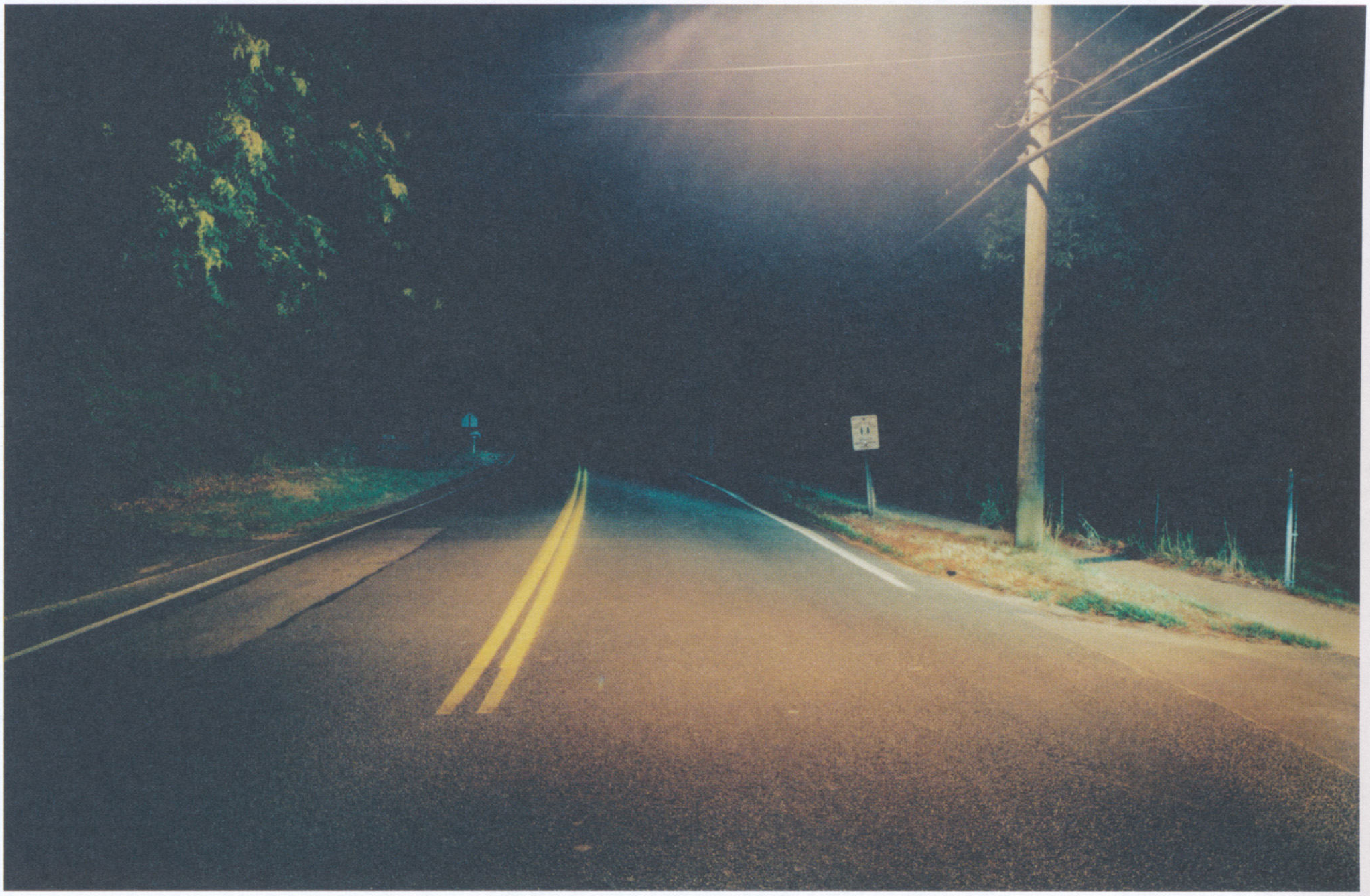

JACKSON POLLOCK / AUGUST 11, 1956 / SPRINGS-FIREPLACE ROAD, EAST HAMPTON, NY

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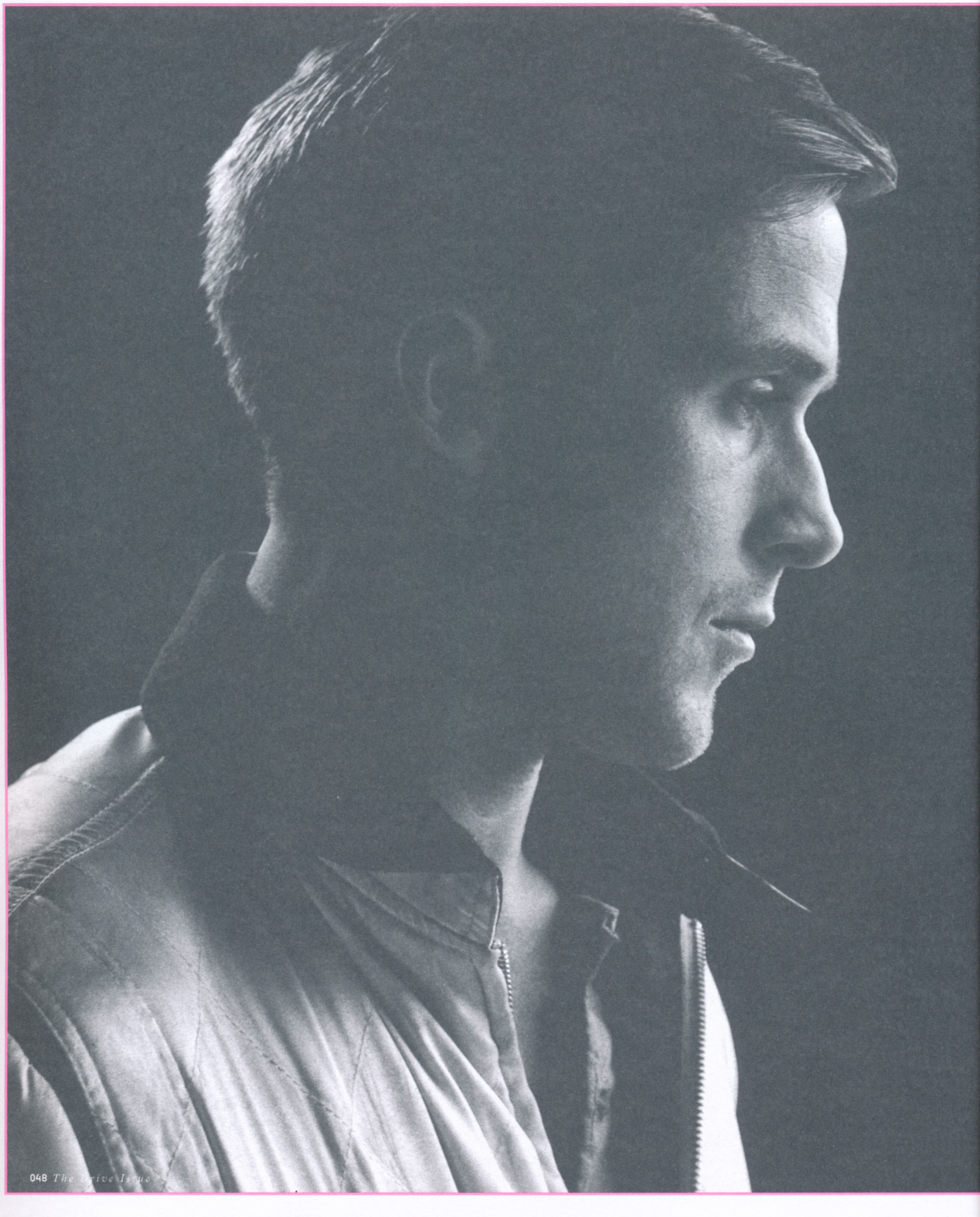


Full Throttle

WITH CRITICAL ACCLAIM RINGING IN HIS EARS AND A MULTITUDE OF PROJECTS ON THE GO,

WORDS BY ADAM WOODWARD

RYAN GOSLING IS STRAPPED INTO THE DRIVING SEAT AND SHIFTING THROUGH THE GEARS.

Like his uncaged antihero in *Drive*, Ryan Gosling is a wanted man. At the time of print he's promoting three films (*Drive*, *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, *The Ides of March*), shooting his next (*The Place Beyond the Pines*) and prepping two more (*Only God Forgives*, *The Gangster Squad*). It's the schedule of someone firmly in demand, but when the call came in from Gosling's New York apartment late one evening in July, *LWLies* found not a movie star on the run but a man unbound.

"I've had a fantasy for years of robbing a bank. I don't know where it comes from and obviously I'd never really do it because I'm too scared of jail, but I have the whole thing mapped out in my head and I know I could get away with it." Why is he confessing this now? "I told Derek [Cianfrance, writer/director of *Blue Valentine*] about it one night and he said – 'You have to be kidding me, I just wrote a movie about that.' And so he sent me the script and it turned out we'd both been dreaming the same thing."

It's no coincidence that Gosling and Cianfrance were on the same subconscious page. While pay cheques and awards prospects are so often the steering factors in actors' careers, Gosling isn't driven by fame but by the desire to find creative kindred spirits. He signed up to *Blue Valentine* in 2003 after becoming "infatuated" with an early draft of the script, and although financial constraints would postpone filming until late 2009, he stuck by the project, nurturing the story with Cianfrance and co-star Michelle Williams.

Just how much does Gosling value collaborative harmony? "It's everything. I mean, you're only as good as your director, and if you don't have the same vision then it's hard to really make anything work and the movie won't reach its full potential. When you're both dreaming of the same place it makes it more real, somehow. I've been looking for filmmakers that can help me and that I can help make the most potent film, and I feel like I've found that in Derek Cianfrance and in Nicolas [Winding Refn]. I feel like we'll make many movies together."

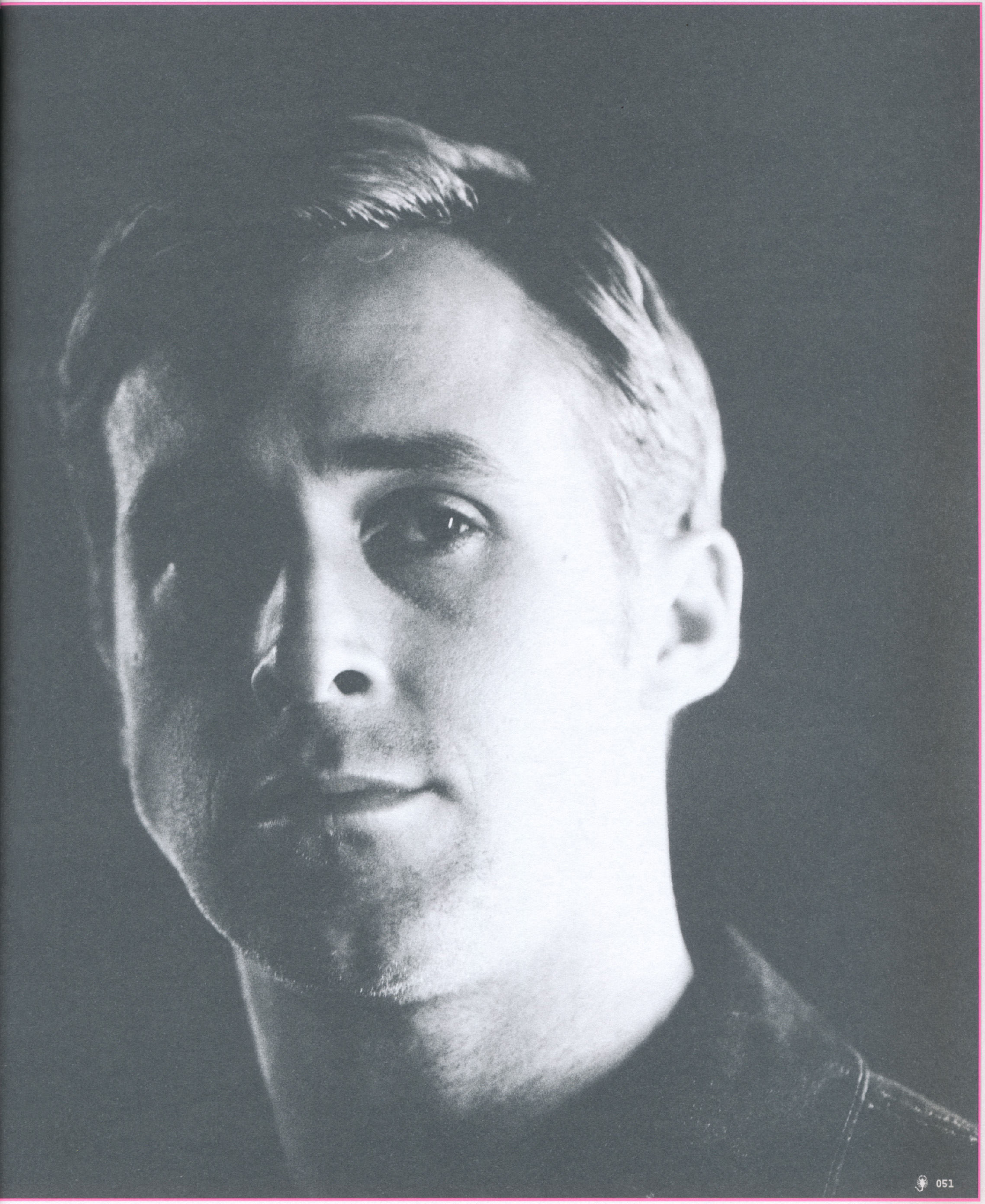
Under a polished chassis of fluid action and cotton candy romance, the engine of *Drive* purrs to the beat of a special marriage between director and star. "Did he tell you that we creatively mated and conceived a movie baby in the backseat of my car?" Gosling inquires when *LWLies* alludes to Refn's version of a provisional meeting between the two in an LA diner. "That's basically what happened. We had this kinda awkward meal and afterwards I gave him a ride home and we just hit it off. We tried to use that experience in the car as a sort of guiding star," he says. "The movie was born out of circumstance and we tried to keep allowing the circumstances we found ourselves in to dictate the direction of the film. We would shoot all day and edit all night at Nicolas' house that he'd rented, and then when we were done and it was time to go home we'd just drive around listening to music and talk about movies and life, and that would effect the next day of shooting."

* * *

Had that anecdotal first encounter gone differently *Drive* would have stalled, but Gosling would have continued sitting shotgun as Refn cruised east LA thumbing a ride. Because while *Drive* possesses the inimitable voice of its director, it was Gosling who applied the pressure that set the project in motion.

He suggested Refn for the top gig after being impressed by *Bronson*, and reflects that the decision to approach the Dane came from "just a feeling I had that he was my dude." Of course, Gosling could not have known how fully their relationship would bloom, nor that they would share a mutual passion for '80s teen movies ("We imagined *Drive* as a love letter to John Hughes, written in blood"), but brushing aside the astuteness of his impulse is typical of a man who remains humble and open despite his A-list status.

Gosling is a rare breed: an actor with unlimited ambition whose trajectory through Hollywood has been facilitated, not hindered, by unswerving integrity and an apparent urge to redraft the movie star blueprint. Throughout



his career he's taken on roles that would be beyond the reach of most rising stars, from an Orthodox Jew turned neo-Nazi in his 2001 breakthrough *The Believer*, to a pathological teenage killer in *The United States of Leland*, to a scag-addict middle-school teacher in *Half Nelson*. Not all of his choices have been made with the same on-the-spot conviction, however. "There are a ton of films I haven't made because I didn't click with the director's vision," he admits.

"*Lars and the Real Girl* is a film that could've gone either way. It walked a very delicate line and I was skeptical about the direction that Craig [Gillespie] was going to take it in. But when I first met him he said that he wanted to put a nudity clause in the contract for Bianca [the mail-order RealDoll with whom Lars becomes romantically involved] and have a trailer for her and a team of people around her treating her just like any of the other actresses. So I knew that the seed we were trying to plant had a chance.

"Actually, there's an interesting similarity between *Lars* and *Drive* in that both characters don't have many lines," he continues, excitedly. "I always find that a relief because a lot of times dialogue confuses the issue. I think often a performance can be a lot more powerful and clearer without words."

As well as having a keen eye for challenging and unusual characters, Gosling's readiness to roll up his sleeves has also helped set him apart from his peers. In preparation for 2004's *The Notebook* he hand-carved a kitchen table that would provide the backdrop for *that* kiss, simultaneously keeping notes on the workings of his relationship with then-girlfriend Rachel McAdams as groundwork for *Blue Valentine*. For *Drive*, Gosling became intimately involved with a different type of 'she', refurbishing a 1972 Chevy Malibu from scratch. "It was in a pretty bad way when we picked it up and I spent a lot of time restoring it," he says. "Before that I went to work at Billy Stadeel's Auto Shop: he's sort of Hollywood car royalty; his father used to work on all Frank Sinatra's cars and Billy still has Sinatra's Rolls Royce in his garage."

With this level of commitment, it's hardly surprising that Gosling is fast becoming known as a directors' actor – a perception supported by forthcoming reunions with Cianfrance on *The Place Beyond the Pine*s and Refn on *Only God Forgives* as well as the remake of *Logan's Run*. Yet despite regularly going the extra mile, Gosling dismisses the notion that his style fits the method mould.

"I wouldn't dare call myself a 'method actor' because I haven't trained in the art of it," he asserts. "But making stuff is something that I love, and making movies gives me the opportunity to learn how to do something in the hope of trying to figure out what I'm doing."

Tuning his spanner skills wasn't the only motivation for making *Drive*, though. It also allowed Gosling to satisfy a more primitive compulsion. "I've always been attracted to cars. Not necessarily the aesthetic of them, but there's something about them. When I was a kid I used to sneak into my parents' car – a few times I actually took it out of park and reversed it out into the street – and I've always felt a special connection to driving.

"When I first read the script I was hoping that we could make it about the experience of driving and not about chasing or being chased, or even speed or stunts. I just wanted to use the spell that a car puts you under, and the spell that a movie can put you under, to take you into this driver's dream. I've just always liked to take road trips and be alone in my car, which is one of the reasons why I love Los Angeles so much. I moved there when I was 16 and I think the majority of the years I've spent there have been, as with everyone else, in a car."

Through a filter of windscreens and camera lenses, Gosling has been exposed to a side of his adopted home (he's Canadian by birth) most people will only ever experience secondhand. Yet he's managed to position himself in a way that renders LA fully transparent ("It's a great setting for *Drive* because it's built on fantasy"). He's wary of being pigeonholed, actively counteracting more commercially minded films with personal, low-budget projects. At this moment, however, Gosling's main concern isn't escaping the spotlight; it's staying in it. "I find it hard to find the time for everything I want to do, make all the things I want to make. It's very frustrating. You can't quit Hollywood and then just expect to keep making films and being fulfilled creatively."

Denny's
IRENE

In a further echo of his *Drive* character, Gosling has another, darker side. In 2009 he released a self-titled album with friend Zach Shields under the guise of Dead Man's Bones, channeling a shared obsession with ghosts into an ethereal, experimental sound. For now, Gosling's focus is back on acting, but don't count out future breaks from the big screen. "Taking two years off and making that record informed the films that I made after it," he says. "I think it's important to get distance sometimes in order to gain perspective on myself, on what I'm making and on where I'm going. You read so many different things and although I've never really paid too much attention to that, it's important to maintain a sense of who I am.

"In my twenties, independent cinema was the only place where I had any freedom and now I have more freedom at a bigger budget, so I'm more comfortable working at that scale," he adds. "But I guess I do prefer being able to make what I want, and you can't always do that on bigger budget stuff. I don't like having to serve a committee, you know? The screen is yours to fill however you want to fill it, and if you can't do that anymore I don't see what the point is."

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★★★★
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

"ELEGANT"
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"HAUNTING"
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SLEEPING
BEAUTY

CERT TBC

A JULIA LEIGH FILM

EMILY BROWNING RACHAEL BLAKE

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Getaway Tracks

COMPOSER CLIFF MARTINEZ REVEALS THE INSPIRATION

WORDS BY ADAM WOODWARD

BEHIND THE PULSING *DRIVE* SOUNDTRACK.

Driver checks over his right shoulder, concrete stare and static toothpick masking his apprehension as he lightly squeezes the wheel of his silver Chevy Impala. The five-minute window for the raid he's just become accessory to has shut, and as his foot hits the floor, the deafening three-way cacophony of stereo, wristwatch and distant squad car siren yields to the snarl of the engine.

Although Refn and Gosling set the tone, it's Cliff Martinez who gives this electrifying opening sequence traction. Most notable for his semi-regular collaborations with Steven Soderbergh (he got his first gig on 1989's *sex, lies, and videotape* and has since scored *Traffic*, *Solaris* and the forthcoming *Contagion*), the former Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer-turned-film composer is rapidly gaining a reputation for his ultra-ambitious and unconventional style. *Drive* is his latest anthemic hit.

* * *

Infused with pulsing rhythms and consciously obtrusive flourishes of '80s synth pop, Martinez's score isn't what audiences might expect to find on the same frequency as an ostensible petrol-head thriller. "The first thing I remember Nicolas telling me was, 'I've always wanted to create a fairy tale about Los Angeles'," reveals Martinez. "As I got to know him and the film better, there was an innocent and magical quality to the story that emerged, and I realised how important it was to counter-balance the more brutal and sensationalistic moments."

Having not been familiar with Refn's work before tuning into *Drive*, Martinez admits that, while impressed by the director's vision, he was caught off guard by the challenge laid down in front of him. "Nicolas asked me to create an atmosphere that functioned in the same way as music but was not what most people would actually consider music. I knew that Nicolas was in love with that '80s electronic sound, and I saw a way to acknowledge it with vintage synth sounds and cover most of the dramatic food groups while referencing that style.

"One thing that was unique for me about this project was having songs exert such a strong influence on the score," he continues. "Usually the songs and the score go their own separate stylistic ways, but the songs that had been chosen for *Drive* were essential role models that would have to be acknowledged in the score, so in some respect I was the meat in the middle of a soundtrack sandwich. My goal was to create a seamless flow between the songs, the score and the sound effects.

After getting to grips with the concept, Martinez was given one final, unexpected ingredient to throw into the mix. "Nicolas told me that *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was his all-time favorite film. There were many times when I would play him something and he'd say, 'That's nice, but can you give me a little more of that Leatherface thing?' That was another contrasting stroke; adding a horror element to a film that really wasn't a horror film."

* * *

Composers, like actors, are often typecast. For Martinez, however, taking on complex and unusual projects like *Drive* isn't part of some contrived strategy to insure his artistic voice. It's all about letting the beat take the lead. "The only way to compete in a marketplace where the supply of musicians far exceeds the demand for work is to be unconventional. That's my highbrow explanation for wanting to do things a little differently," he jokes.

"The more truthful reason is that I really don't know how to be conventional. I'm an untrained, self-taught musician and whenever I try to be normal I usually end up embarrassing myself. I just prefer it when there is enough ambiguity in a film to give the music something to do. That's what music does best: express the things that words and images do not or cannot."

DRIVE MIXTAPE

COMPOSER CLIFF MARTINEZ, DIRECTOR NICOLAS WINDING REFN AND WRITER JAMES SALLIS GIVE US THEIR TOP FIVE *DRIVE*-EVOKING CRUISING TUNES.

A Cliff Martinez – Composer

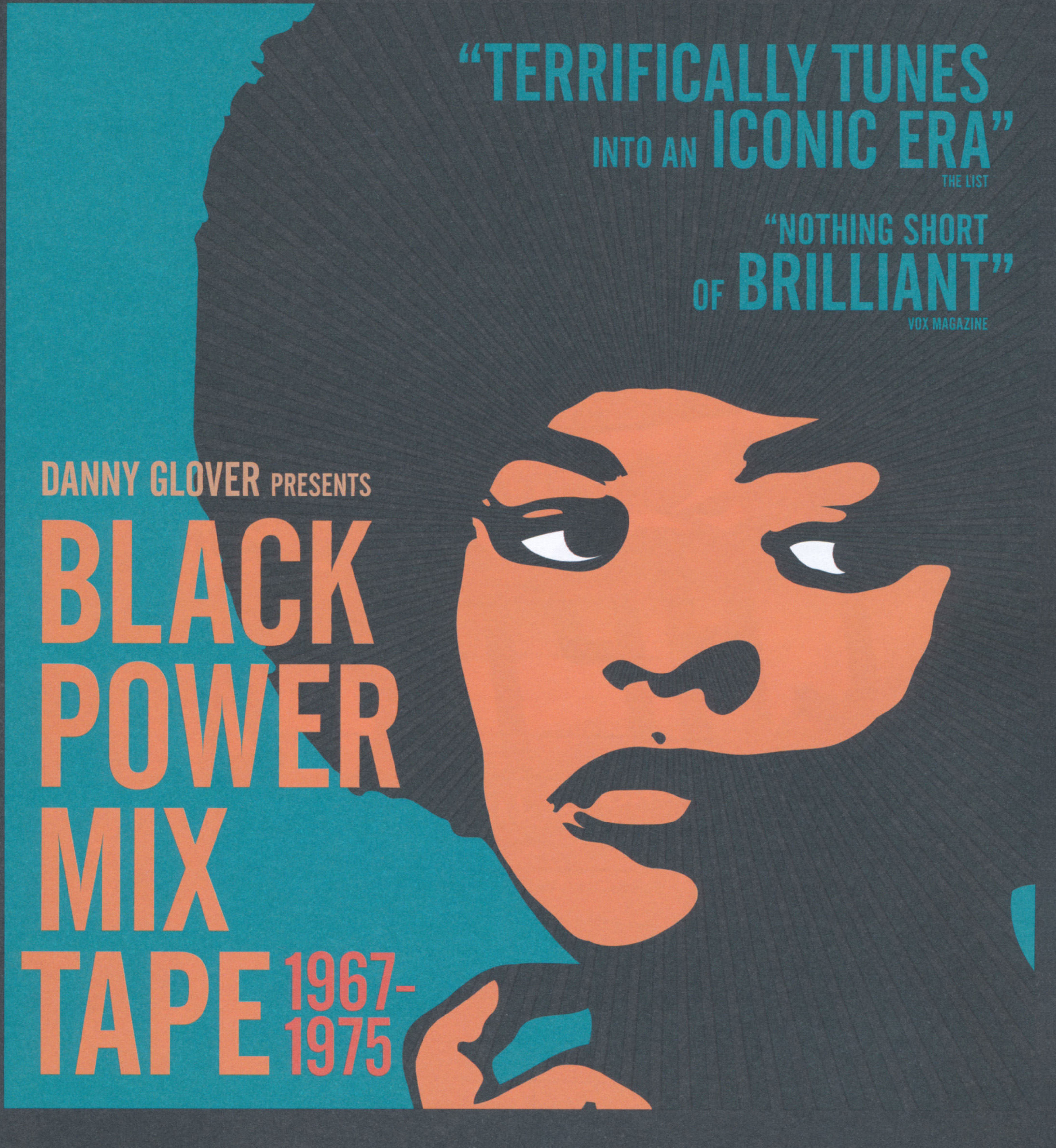
1. One Red Rose That I Mean – Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band
2. Tight Like This – Louis Armstrong and his Savoy Ballroom Five
3. Gettin' Funkier All the Time – The Meters
4. Lontano – Gyorgy Ligeti
5. Cretin Hop – The Ramones

B Nicolas Winding Refn – Director

1. Sailing – Christopher Cross
2. Radioactivity – Kraftwork
3. God Damn The Sun – Swans
4. Bela Lugosi's Dead – Bauhaus
5. I Was Made For Loving You – Kiss

C James Sallis – Writer

1. Death Letter Blues – Son House
2. Hellhound on My Trail – Robert Johnson
3. Fixin' to Die – Bukka White
4. Things About Comin' My Way – The Mississippi Sheiks
5. Nine Below Zero – Sonny Boy Williamson



“TERRIFICALLY TUNES INTO AN ICONIC ERA”
THE LIST

“NOTHING SHORT OF BRILLIANT”
VOX MAGAZINE

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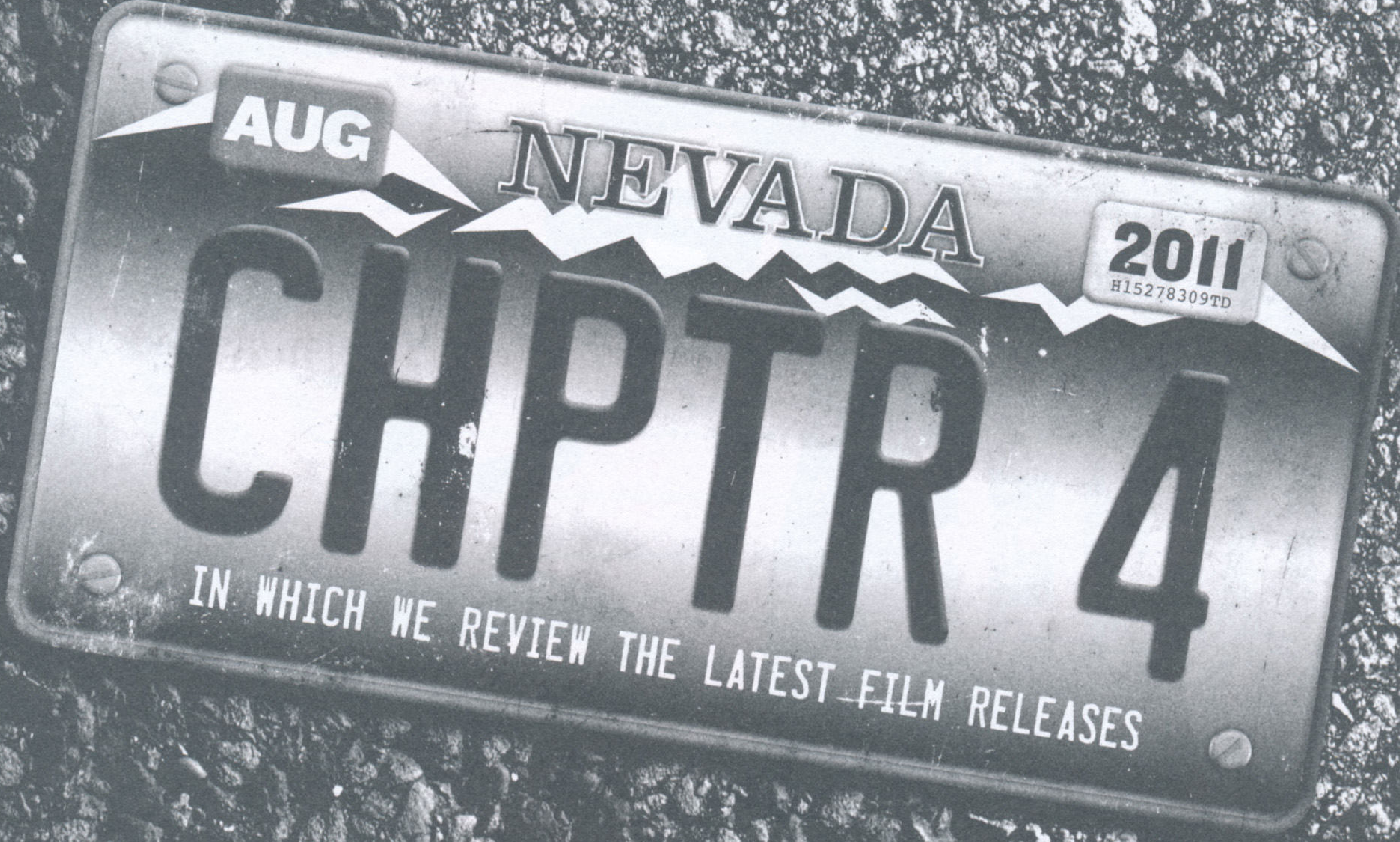
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IN WHICH WE REVIEW THE LATEST FILM RELEASES

The Ides of March

Directed by **George Clooney**
Starring **Ryan Gosling, George Clooney, Paul Giamatti**
Released **October 28**

Having made just four films since being Oscar-nominated for his tremendous performance as a junkie school teacher in 2006 drama *Half Nelson*, Ryan Gosling is now hitting the big-screen three times inside two months. But where you get the feeling that the visceral cool of *Drive* and the playboy jokiness of *Crazy, Stupid, Love.* aren't big stretches for the 30-year-old heartthrob, *The Ides of March* is the real deal.

Chewing over ever-apt American themes of busted idealism, corruption, trust, betrayal and power, writer/director George Clooney's superb ensemble political drama takes its name from the day that Julius Caesar was stabbed to death by those closest to him. Co-written with regular screenwriter Grant Heslov, it's a big-screen adaptation of Beau Willimon's play *Farragut North*, based on Willimon's time as an aide during the failed 2004 presidential bid of US politician Howard Dean.

Back in the director's chair for the fourth time, it's Clooney himself who steps up as oh-so-groomed presidential wannabe Mike Morris. But Gosling's Stephen Myers is the man behind the man: the campaign whiz kid whose super-smart spin and speech-writing will get Morris to the White House. "Nothing bad happens when you're doing the right thing," says Myers – fatefully, as it turns out.

This is Clooney returning to *Good Night, and Good Luck*'s high-risk atmosphere and absorbing immediacy – the kind of cinema where men talking in rooms becomes gripping drama. Injecting a stagy setup with agility and urgency, the vibe feels less like the Gatling-gun wit of *The West Wing* and more like *The Wire*'s poisonous political subplot.

And so it goes. Myers finds his charisma fizzling out, his naivety exposed and his idealism splintered as Morris' campaign evolves into a trench-war of wits played by older, wiser, tougher men. In a series of pressure-cooker confrontations you can't take your eyes off, Gosling goes head-to-head against the big boys. As the senior wingman on Morris' team, Philip Seymour Hoffman brings another frighteningly powerful performance. Up against them, Paul Giamatti's rival campaign manager cranks down his intensity for a cunning, compulsive turn that complements Hoffman's perfectly.

Given an intelligent script and space to flex it, Clooney's cast keeps the drama powering forward through deeper, darker shades. As a frisky intern at the heart of the drama, Evan Rachel Wood reminds us why she's one of Hollywood's most interesting (if underused) young actresses. While Marisa Tomei's spiky turn as a journalist makes a refreshing change from seeing her set up and laid flat for a funny-faced male co-star (see: *The Wrestler*; *Cyrus*; *Crazy, Stupid, Love.*).

And Gosling? This is his best – and most interesting – performance since *Half Nelson*. As ideals and integrity slowly slip from his grasp, he convincingly dismantles Myers from cocksure swagger to disillusionment to hardened acceptance. *The Ides of March* completes a whirlwind journey from periphery player to heartthrob to serious actor. This is Gosling's year. **Jonathan Crocker**

Anticipation. Gosling. Hoffman. Giamatti. Clooney. Welcome to big school. **4**

Enjoyment. Intelligent script, fantastic performances, unsettling moral accuracy. **4**

In Retrospect. A dark drama that gleams with pure quality. **4**

Gary Oldman
Spy Card

Interview by ***Adam Woodward***

Select Filmography
Gary Oldman

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy *(2011)*
The Dark Knight *(2008)*
Batman Begins *(2005)*
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban *(2004)*
The Fifth Element *(1997)*
Léon *(1994)*
True Romance *(1993)*
Sid and Nancy *(1986)*

From sharp-suited drug pusher to wizarding outlaw to Gotham watchman, Gary Oldman has established himself as one of cinema's most versatile character actors over the past two decades. Now he's slipping into spy mode for *Let the Right One In* director Tomas Alfredson's star-studded adaptation of John le Carré's 1974 novel *Tinker Tailor Solider Spy*. *LWLies* rendezvoused with Oldman in a backstreet Soho hotel for a meeting that proved anything but covert…

LWLies: This feels like a very old fashioned thriller. Is that what attracted you to it?
Oldman: It's interesting in this day and age to make an intellectual thriller. You've got audiences now that are so used to Bond and Bourne, where there's car chases and lots of gunfire and cut, cut, cut. Things are more leisurely here, so it's more European in that sense – more atmospheric.

Speaking of a 'European sensibility', what did Tomas Alfredson bring to the project? Yeah, I think he's…

[The door creaks opens. Tomas Alfredson enters the room, completely unannounced]

Alfredson: Hi.

Oldman: Tomas! We were just talking about you…

Alfredson: You were? How nice.

Oldman *[to LWLies]*: Now you can ask him yourself! *[Laughs]*

[Oldman embraces Alfredson and pats him on the back affectionately]

Oldman: How the hell are you Tomas?

Alfredson: Good, good…

Oldman: He was just asking what you brought to the project…

Alfredson: Nothing. *[Alfredson laughs and produces a packet of Swedish chewing gum]* Would you like one?
Oldman: Not for me. What are you up to?

[Alfredson turns to LWLies *gesturing with the gum]*

We're good, thanks.

Alfredson: It's natural extract, green tea!

[LWLies takes a piece of gum; it's horrible]

Alfredson: I'm off to Madrid early tomorrow and back on Wednesday, how long are you around for?

Oldman: I'm in London for a week or so, and then I go to Nottingham to do *Batman*.

Alfredson: Okay, well if you have something you want to discuss then we could talk tomorrow. I'll give you a call when I'm in Madrid in the evening or something.

Oldman: Yeah, sure. You get to go to all the places now: London, Madrid, Venice…

Alfredson: *[laughs]* Ah, Venice!

Oldman: You happy about that?

Alfredson: Very. It's great.

Oldman: *[Raising his right arm up from his side in a slow, theatrical manner]* You've never made love until you've made love in a gondola!

[The room bursts into laughter]

Alfredson: *[Still chuckling]* You've been to Venice?

Oldman: Oh yeah, I wasn't in the festival but my girlfriend at the time had a film there so I went. It's lovely; you arrive on a boat and get plonked right onto the red carpet. I'm looking forward to it this year… This isn't official information, by the way.

You're not very good spies…

Oldman: *[Laughs]* Useless! We're going to Venice [with the film].

That's pretty exciting.

Alfredson: Yeah, should be fun. But I'll let you get on. See you later.

Oldman: Yep, see you later.

[Alfredson leaves]

Oldman: Speak of the devil.

You two clearly share a great deal of camaraderie. What was the vibe on set like?
Exactly the same.

Is that important on a film like this? When you've got the *crème de la crème* of British acting, that relaxed mood is important. But when you've got myself and Colin Firth on set at the same time, we're not going to take ourselves too seriously. Tomas is very prepped and decisive about what he wants, but very much open to ideas. If you've got something to contribute he doesn't shut down or close off.

What drew you to the character specifically? Well, it's such an iconic role. It's delicious, and it's a character I've never really played before. I've had, sort of, 10 years of fantasy, with *Harry Potter* and *Batman*…

Not to mention Lost in Space and *The Fifth Element*. And *Léon* to an extent, because I guess that started things moving towards a comic-book presentation. It's been nice doing something a bit more serious, to be honest. That's not putting down *Harry Potter* or anything else I've been in recently. I mean, it's a different kind of animal, but the work on *Batman* is so very specific. Chris Nolan is totally out there on his own in terms of style and what he does with the camera.

How's the new film looking? I haven't seen that much footage yet, but you can just about see the piece coming together. It'll go off with a bang, though, you can bet on that.

Check out the full interview online in the week of the film's release.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy

Directed by ***Tomas Alfredson***
Starring ***Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Tom Hardy***
Released ***September 16***

There's a quandary at the heart of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, Tomas Alfredson's elegant follow up to 2008's *Let the Right One In*. In adapting John le Carré's 1974 espionage novel, the Swedish director has chanced his arm by eschewing contemporary crime thriller trappings in the name of unmitigated authenticity.

He's right to – the slow-burning anti-Bourne plot commands it – but his loyalty to le Carré's billowy prose will be lost on those conditioned by the two-fisted testosterone of Damon, Craig and Jase the Stath. But although it's both anomalous and out of fashion, Alfredson's film is, by the same intimation, a priceless antique set conspicuously in a sea of noisy thrift-store clutter.

We open in Budapest, where a bullet travels through the back of MI6 officer Jim Prideaux (Mark Strong) to the heart of the British SIS, tipping Control (John Hurt) off his perch and forcing his closest ally, George Smiley (Gary Oldman), into retirement. But a tip-off from an AWOL agent sees Smiley recalled to unearth a Soviet mole in the ranks. Picking up where Control left off, Smiley and wide-eyed upstart Peter Guillam (Benedict Cumberbatch) set about exhuming the Circus' most deeply buried skeletons.

Oldman's proclivity for playing villains makes him something of a suspect choice for the lead, but his ability to simultaneously convey hangdog fragility and silky sangfroid with nothing more than a creased brow is exactly what the character calls for. Smiley's a man of few words and firm principles; unconditionally devoted to boosting Blighty over the Cold War hump. His edge over the four prospective defectors he's been appointed to collar (played respectively by Toby Jones, Colin Firth, Ciarán Hinds and David Dencik) is that he's not out for personal gain. Restoring the integrity of the institution he loves is ample motivation. The strength of Oldman's turn carries with it the sinking afterthought that he has been wasted in recent years.

Tom Hardy, meanwhile, gives the old hands a sprint for their shilling as Ricki Tarr, the maverick recruit whose return brings about the hunt for the double agent. But in truth it's the concerted efforts of the aforementioned sextet that makes *Tinker, Tailor* so compelling. This isn't merely an actors' film, though. While Oldman and co compensate jargon-heavy but essential exposition with deftly nuanced performances, it's the grainy, sepia-tinged finish applied to Alfredson's meticulous recreation of 1970s London by his regular cinematographer Hoyte Van Hoytema that you'll wind up getting lost in.

While spy flicks have become progressively more superficial since the days of *Three Days of the Condor* and *The Conversation*, Alfredson's atmospheric and at times devastating whisper revels in the unglamorous and austere nature of covert lives. If his class was obscured from mainstream view before now, consider the secret out. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. Old-school British spy caper with a Scandinavian twist. **4**

Enjoyment. A classy story of duplicity and paranoia from an uncompromisingly gifted filmmaker. **4**

In Retrospect. Awards glory beckons. **4**

Jane Eyre

Directed by ***Cary Fukunaga***
Starring ***Mia Wasikowska, Michael Fassbender, Jamie Bell***
Released ***September 9***

Oh, great. Just what we need. Another adaptation of some tired novel by whatever hidebound writer we're 'revisiting' this year, conveniently forgetting why we stopped seeing them in the first place.

Only, hang on. It says here that Cary Fukunaga is directing *Jane Eyre*. That can't be right. Didn't he make contemporary-as-fuck US border drama *Sin Nombre*? And, wait a minute: Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender are the leads? The same Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender who more or less constitute the two most interesting and worthwhile actors of the moment? Shit. Maybe this is worth a shot.

In fact, *Jane Eyre* is worth more than a shot. It's not a contender, it's a prize fighter: a sumptuous Gothic thriller based on the novel by Charlotte Brontë. It tells the tale of a young governess who falls for a dashing aristo, only to discover – too late – that his ancestral manor is home to a dark secret.

Fukunaga isn't trading in Baz Luhrmann-style reinvention. This isn't an adaptation for the kids, and there's no particular twenty-first-century resonance. What he's done, brilliantly as it turns out, is strip the novel down to its roots, focusing resolutely on the dramatic arc of Jane and Rochester's relationship, enriched by the pathos of her past, and some genuinely creepy scenes that bring the story's darkest moments vividly to life.

Jane's is a lifelong saga of betrayal, of hopes dashed and lies swallowed. Wasikowska has never looked more fragile, more hopelessly vulnerable than she does here, and yet there's an inner steel to this performance that contrasts Rochester's vacillating charm and despair. Fassbender is electric – effortlessly charismatic and dangerously seductive; this could finally be the performance that puts Colin Firth's infamous Darcy in the shade.

In approaching the material with respect, restraint and simple good taste, Fukunaga has created something strangely revelatory. It's not a *Jane Eyre* for our times – just a cracking good watch. And that's really all we hoped for. **Matt Bochenski**

Anticipation. Is this the sequel to *Pride and Sensibility* by that Charlotte Austen woman?

2

Enjoyment. Vivid, compelling and at times properly scary, *Jane Eyre* is actually not rubbish at all.

4

In Retrospect. We'll still be wary of the next nineteenth-century novel adaptation.

3

Perfect Sense

Directed by ***David Mackenzie***
Starring ***Ewan McGregor, Eva Green, Connie Nielsen***
Released ***October 7***

Imagine walking into a fishmonger and not noticing the smell. Or drinking the finest wines known to humanity and tasting water. Now imagine if this sudden loss of sensory perception was happening, without explanation, to people all around the world.

In *Perfect Sense*, Ewan McGregor plays a chef, Michael, who meets an epidemiologist, Susan (Eva Green), as a strange epidemic grips the planet, slowly robbing people of their senses. During what should be their honeymoon period, the couple find themselves suffering heightened feelings of grief and expressing irrational outbursts towards one another – not exactly the candle-light and oysters routine one would expect. The pair are forced to embark on their relationship in a world where being struck with sudden disability has become commonplace.

With neither explanation nor cure for the phenomenon forthcoming, a state of pandemonium erupts worldwide and the film becomes both terrifying and strangely beautiful. Exploring the human side of science-fiction, *Perfect Sense* poses the question: would we rebel and ransack the world or find a collective solace in our loss? As the film's stoical mantra insists, life goes on, but that doesn't stop director David Mackenzie from fashioning the kind of apocalyptic thrills and chills more akin to a zombie flick. And yet these cinematic fireworks are grounded by a subtle and effective sense of realism. In this context, everything suddenly seems panickingly plausible.

The film constantly appeals to the audience's visceral sense of perception, too: some shots look so raw you can almost smell them; others are deafeningly silent. Best of all, it plays on common sense – forcing the audience to question whether, in a crisis, we would adapt and evolve or simply revert to a feral existence.

In fact, *Perfect Sense* threatens to be one of those rare instances where the idea is actually more intriguing than the film itself. But as Michael and Susan lose their senses – and possibly each other – the myopic world of *Perfect Sense* becomes increasingly sensual and mysterious. **Zara Miller**

Anticipation. The trailer left most of the sci-fi stuff behind closed doors.

2

Enjoyment. A tale of romance with the kicks of apocalyptic despair.

3

In Retrospect. An intriguing idea for a film that heightens all the senses.

3

Fright Night

Directed by ***Craig Gillespie***
Starring ***Anton Yelchin,***
Colin Farrell, David Tennant
Released ***September 2***

One of the secrets of a successful revamp is to dig a rotten old title from the crypt. Few would seriously champion Tom Holland's 1985 *Fright Night* – with its cringe-worthy attempts to be down with the '80s kids, its hokey cheesiness and its sly demonisation of homosexuality – as a horror classic. So for Craig Gillespie's remake, the only way is up.

The basic story remains the same, but Marti Noxon's screenplay jiggles with the locations and narrative order, while throwing in a few genuinely surprising innovations, and peppering the dialogue with up-to-date cultural references and amiable, vaguely racy wit.

Living with his divorced but still 'ripe' mother Jane (Toni Collette), teenager Charley Brewster (Anton Yelchin) is a bundle of nerves, still not quite able to believe that beautiful Amy (Imogen Poots) is actually, willingly, his girlfriend. In the absence of a father, our virginal hero has long put behind him his boyhood friendship with the geeky 'Evil' Ed (Christopher Mintz-Plasse, a whole lot less irritating than Stephen Geoffreys in the original), but now finds himself caught between two rather different models of masculinity – new alpha-male neighbour Jerry, who just happens to be a vampire (Colin Farell in feral form), and Vegas showman and would-be lothario Peter Vincent (David Tennant, channelling Russell Brand). As the stakes get high, Charley will find his own way to break hearts with a long, hard stick.

If this somewhat tendentious summary of *Fright Night* privileges the boy-to-man subtext (in a film that, after all, ends in a long-delayed act of sexual consummation), then all the usual thrills and spills that are the genre's lifeblood are here too, rendered in a 3D that is not afraid to forgo subtlety for more crowd-pleasing in-your-face splatter.

This new *Fright Night* neither is, nor pretends to be, any kind of masterpiece, but it is better than the original, and better, too, than the *Twilight* series it pointedly mocks in one scene. Beneath its vampiric surface there is plenty of rites-of-passage subtext into which viewers (especially male adolescent viewers) can sink their teeth. **Anton Bitel**

Anticipation. The original sucked – this can hardly be worse. **3**

Enjoyment. Slickly competent, but doesn't quite get the blood boiling. **3**

In Retrospect. Best appreciated by male adolescents: this is *Twilight* for boys. **3**

Friends with Benefits

Directed by ***Will Gluck***
Starring ***Justin Timberlake,***
Mila Kunis, Richard Jenkins
Released ***September 9***

A knowing irony underlies Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis' presence in Hollywood's latest sassy two-step. While a *Mickey Mouse Club* graduate-turned-boy band pinup-turned-global pop icon, and a child actor-slash-teen sitcom darling are a rom-com match made in heaven, it feels somewhat paradoxical that this champagne union has arrived so soon after *The Social Network* and *Black Swan* respectively cemented their dramatic credentials. But then, *Friends with Benefits* is all about bucking the trend.

Easy A director Will Gluck dedicates a healthy portion of his fuck-buddy fairy tale to tiptoeing neatly around cliché while name-checking various rom-com trappings. It's a contrived trick, but the film's consistent self-awareness makes it far more appetising than other likeminded boy-meets-girl fancies. Even our A-list leads are game for a spot of self-satire – at one point Timberlake emphatically raps along to Kriss Kross' 'Jump Jump'.

But if all this puts *Friends with Benefits* firmly in the alt camp, in contrast to a true indie hit like 2009's *(500) Days of Summer*, Gluck's film is incontrovertibly mainstream at heart, inevitably aligning itself with the blueprint it spends so long deriding. Still, the key to the film's success is that the characters aren't Photoshopped rom-com dummies. Sure, Dylan (Timberlake) and Jamie (Kunis) are young, gorgeous and successful, but they're flawed, too. Even more than the opening 'she's emotionally damaged; he's a commitmentphobe' disclaimer accounts for.

As the details of their pasts and private lives are revealed, we become acquainted with both characters on a personal level rarely afforded by films of a superficial ilk. We meet Jamie's nomadic, sponger mother (Patricia Clarkson) and Dylan's dementia-suffering father (Richard Jenkins on top form), and while these supporting turns are largely played for laughs, the moral core they provide is indispensable. This is a relationship built as much on the sharing of feelings as the exposure of flesh. It's friends first, benefits second.

The evils of the genre aren't entirely absent (the less said about Woody Harrelson's painfully ill-conceived gay BFF the better), but with Kunis and Timberlake irresistible from the off, you'll forgive the occasional lapse into shallower territory. Besides, any film that can make a flash mob look like actual fun must be doing something right. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. Can JT and Kunis bring sexy back? **3**

Enjoyment. And then some! Rock-solid rom-com delight. **3**

In Retrospect. Consider our faith in Hollywood romance restored. For now. **3**

Colombiana

Directed by ***Olivier Megaton***
Starring ***Zoe Saldana, Michael Vartan, Callum Blue***
Released ***September 9***

Revenge may be a dish best served cold, but thanks to a sizzling Zoe Saldana, Luc Besson's latest shoot-'em-up is a sure-fire scorcher. Teaming with the feisty femme of the moment, Besson has a writer/producer credit on *Colombiana*, but it's quite clearly his *bambino*. Once envisioned as a sequel to *Léon* starring a grown-up Mathilda, but reworked into a *Nikita*-aping, assassin revenge flick, *Colombiana* combines both the best and worst of France's foremost action fanatic.

The best? Well, in the wake of Angelina Jolie's so-so *Salt*, *Colombiana* knows how to have a good time *and* get its hands grubby. Director Olivier Megaton's mission statement is 'Bourne with boobs', and he very nearly hits that target. With its opening shot cradling an endless sea of favelas, not to mention *Colombiana*'s handful of dusty, dirty fist fights (choreographed by *The Bourne Identity*'s Alain Figlarz), Megaton's film is a refined style-oozer that doesn't beat around the bush.

A pacy but patchy opening introduces us to 10-year-old Cataleya, whose parents have just been shot dead. She escapes alive – but only just. Fifteen years later, Cataleya is working as an assassin for her gangster uncle, offing bad guys on his behalf while secretly planning to avenge her dead parents. Which is when Saldana makes her killer entrance, ploughing into a police car and giggling drunkenly when she's arrested. As she's thrown into the clink to sober up, *Colombiana*'s finest set piece unravels – a near-wordless jail assassination that shows us what Cataleya (and Saldana) is made of.

A wily, wiry waster, Saldana holds her own in a massively physical role – most impressively during a brutal final hour bathroom brawl that has her going 10 rounds with a guy twice her size. Shame, then, that Megaton chooses to fetishise her so much; popping Saldana in nipple-enhancing vests and having her suck on lollipops only works to trivialise our otherwise fierce and fearsome anti-heroine.

Because, yes, *Colombiana* is the kind of subtlety-free movie where guns are strapped under tables, gates are smashed open by rampaging trucks, and doors are blown up instead of kicked in. Megaton's film would have done well to stick to the punchy, chat-free approach of its jail segment. As dodgy dialogue pinched from the *Big Book of Crime Thriller Clichés* is repeatedly stuffed down our throats ("She's the mist under the door, you won't see her until it's too late!"), it's clear that *Colombiana* would've worked better as a sexy, sultry silent movie. With a bare bones story set out in a visually snappy style, the dialogue only serves to sour the dish. **Josh Winning**

Anticipation. A post-*Avatar* Zoe Saldana nabs her first mo-cap-free lead role, and Luc Besson's producing? Where do we sign up?	4
Enjoyment. Saldana sizzles as a feisty fatal femme, making up for the duff dialogue.	3
In Retrospect. *Colombiana* wants to be Bourne with boobs, but its connect-the-dots narrative and silted script means it can't quite reach those bone-crunching heights.	3

★★★★★

"AUDACIOUS, **BEAUTIFUL**, TACTFUL FILMMAKING"

Kim Newman, Empire

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30 Minutes or Less

Directed by ***Ruben Fleischer***
Starring ***Jesse Eisenberg, Danny McBride, Nick Swardson***
Released ***September 16***

As is becoming more common by the day, the best way to grasp deadbeat heist comedy *30 Minutes or Less* is to look at how it treats not its male protagonists, but its female supporting characters.

There are only a handful of women in the film, and only two are given names in the credits. One of them is Kate (Dilshad Vadsaria), the pretty, ambitious city professional who just can't tear herself away from lead loser Nick (an improbable Jesse Eisenberg). The other is a callous stripper called Juicy (Bianca Kajlich), who seduces slacker extraordinaire Dwayne (Danny McBride) into formulating a plan to bump off his rich father. Hackneyed caricatures both, but at least they're not relegated to the role of 'Hot Girl' or, heaven forbid, a cameo as the pliant chick who gives Nick's best friend Chet (Aziz Ansari) a supposedly uncomfortable, front-seat blowjob.

It's not that the gents are any better filled out, but *30 Minutes or Less* is entirely focused on their world, and is only interested in their manchildish dilemmas, exploring the conflict between laziness and responsibility while joyfully celebrating a lifestyle of film marathons, *Call of Duty* and Mountain Dew. This is nothing new, and there's a faint air of phoned-in apathy both in the script's references to *Point Break* and *Die Hard*, and the film's reliance on McBride and Ansari's unrelenting mugging, which stretch scenes way beyond their breaking point.

Indeed, while the film is over in 90 minutes or less, half of that is flab, as the overworked plot – Dwayne kidnaps Nick, straps a bomb to his chest and forces him to rob a bank on his behalf – is laid out in painful slow-motion. After all that build-up, the bank job is part-farce, part-chaos, as Chet gibbers and Nick sweats under pressure, and a much-foreshadowed car chase is curtailed.

It all lacks the fun-seeking thrills of director Ruben Fleischer's previous film, *Zombieland*. That, too, starred Eisenberg, but whereas he was in his element there – a neurotic nerd in a world gone Romero – here he flounders. This is a major misstep for both; let's hope they can bounce back. **Michael Leader**

Anticipation. A second collaboration from the star and director of *Zombieland*, but without the concept, character or cameos. **2**

Enjoyment. Puerile, irritating and insultingly phallocentric. **1**

In Retrospect. Will be forgotten in 30 minutes or less. Hopefully less. **1**

Red State

Directed by ***Kevin Smith***
Starring ***Michael Parks, Melissa Leo, John Goodman***
Released ***September 30***

If this is to be Kevin Smith's penultimate gig behind a camera before the one-man film factory retreats to his 'SModcast', he's going out guns blazing. Literally. Smith (aka Silent Bob) created his own 'View Askewniverse' during a career kick-started by DIY stoner-com *Clerks*, brought low by *Jersey Girl* and more recently defined by a *Die Hard* cameo and director-for-hire gigs. But if *Cop Out* felt like Smith playing the game, *Red State* attempts to rip up the rulebook and mess with the audience's expectations. It makes for a bizarre but entertaining ride.

Kicking off with the *American Pie* antics of a trio of high school nerds desperate for action, it looks like we're heading into familiar territory as the guys rendezvous with MILF Melissa Leo. Remember that Louis Theroux doc on the family from Kansas who petition funerals with their 'God Hates Fags' banners? Imagine if they were armed to the teeth and out to lure sinners with a honey trap and potent Jesus juice. Well: meet the Coopers.

It's not long before our poor virgins are Clingfilm-wrapped and ready to be sacrificed on a redneck altar, setting up a fight-or-flight scenario as the fire and brimstone preaching of a pastor who "even the neo-Nazis think is fucked" (played by the excellent Michael Parks) reaches fever pitch.

Unsurprisingly, Quentin Tarantino loves this film – and with its self-conscious Grindhouse aesthetic, it's easy to see why. Still, the balance of genres is uneasy. Smith introduces John Goodman's grouchy cop as the siege standoff escalates. But his wisecracking style – "This ain't a bunch of tweakers in a motel meth lab, these are big bad eggs!" – is at odds with the *Hostel*-style tension Smith is aiming at elsewhere.

But the director keeps things simmering, delivering a one-two of dark laughs and punchy violence while managing to pass serious comment on the use of post 9/11 terror laws. And all this in less than 90 minutes. **Dan Brightmore**

Anticipation. Smith goes Grindhouse. **2**

Enjoyment. A breakneck rush of high school horror meets wisecracking cop thriller meets action mayhem meets... **3**

In Retrospect. Please don't quit, Kev. We've forgiven you for *Jersey Girl*. Honest. **3**

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REVIEWS

The Tree Of Life

Alan Mack | 07.07.11

A glorious ode to the improbability of existence which asks us to cherish the simple processes of living and loving.

Like Halley's Comet, **Terrence Malick's** The Tree of Life feels very much like the kind of cosmic spectacle that most good, law-abiding citizens will get to see just once in their lifetime. The term 'masterpiece' feels

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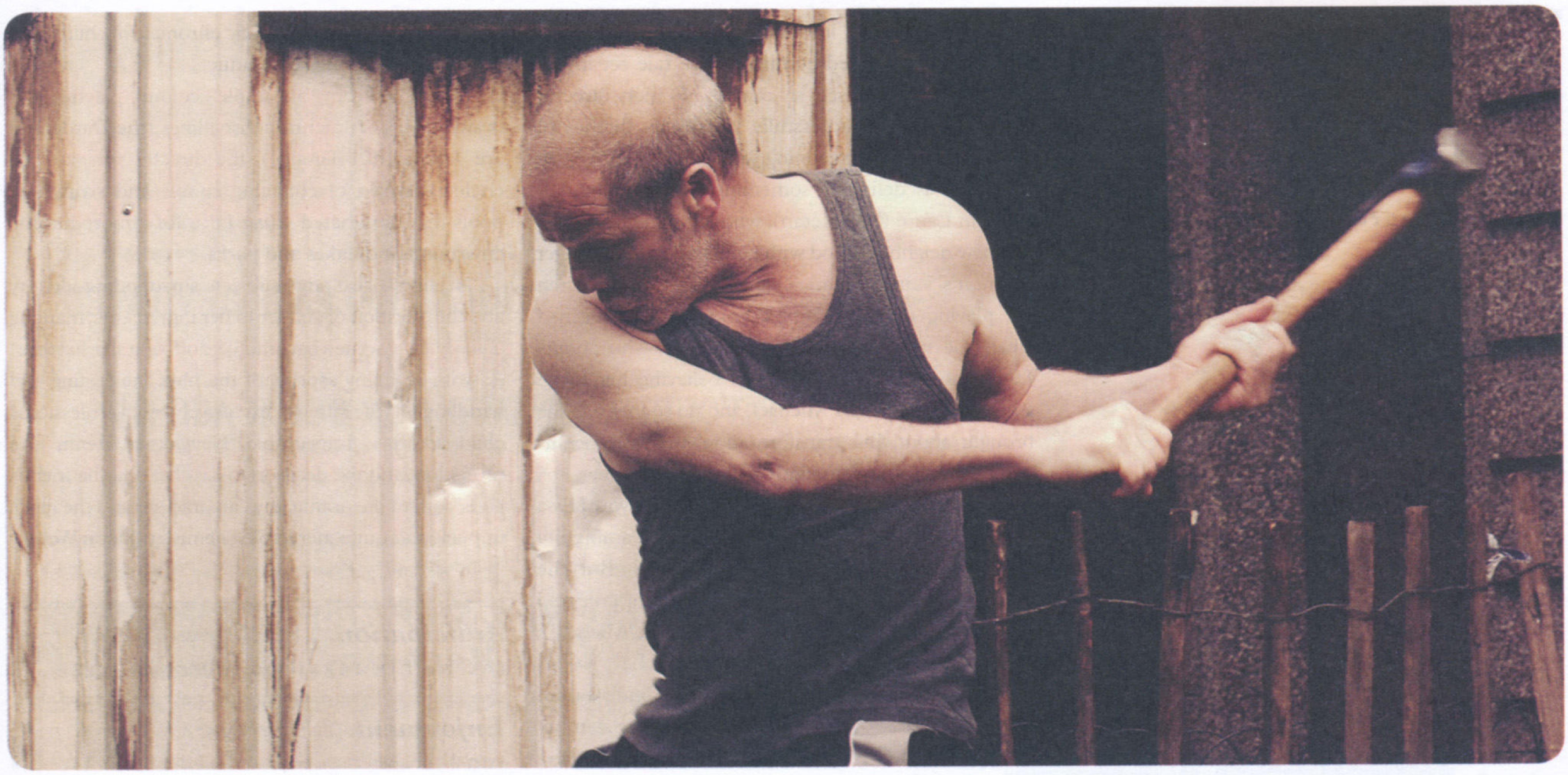


Tyrannosaur

Directed by ***Paddy Considine***
Starring ***Peter Mullan, Olivia Colman, Eddie Marsan***
Released ***October 7***

The most remarkable thing about Paddy Considine's feature debut is that it doesn't feel like a debut at all. Considine may have made his name as an actor of rare physical presence in his collaborations with fellow Midlander Shane Meadows (*A Room for Romeo Brass*, *Dead Man's Shoes*), but it's the restrained assurance he brings to *Tyrannosaur* that stands out. Even so, the finely tuned integration of camera, sound and editing belies the raw power that carries this story.

Developed from Considine's BAFTA and Silver Lion-winning short *Dog Altogether*, *Tyrannosaur* stars Peter Mullan on uncompromising form as Joseph, a lonely alcoholic who contains an abyssal capacity for violence. Struggling to suppress his rage, the demons in Joseph's nature lead him, paradoxically, to a fallen angel, Hannah (Olivia Colman), who appears to offer him a slim chance of redemption.

Joseph's instinct is to lash out – to curse her God, her life and her charity – but he could have saved his breath. Because *Tyrannosaur* isn't interested in anything as straightforward as Joseph's soul. Gradually the roles are reversed, until Joseph the damned has become the saviour of them both.

Considine's eloquent, savagely poetic script is grounded in a cinematic idiom of bleached light, bleak estates and broken lives, where the leaden footsteps of fate reverberate like a Tyrannosaur approaching. But for all its heavy sense of doom, this is a delicate piece of visual storytelling. Considine has an eye for inventive composition, and intuitively grasps how to integrate it with the impeccable tech work provided by DP Erik Wilson, editor Pia Di Caula, production designer Simon Rogers and, in particular, the sound department led by Ben Squires.

If Peter Mullan's performance – all granite-hewed menace and lines delivered like a sledgehammer cracking concrete paving slabs – is of a piece with his usual fearsome intensity, Olivia Colman, by contrast, is a revelation. Coolly subverting her smiley-eyed *Peep Show* persona, she brings a wholly unexpected edge of hysterical anguish and chilling pathos to Hannah.

But there's something else going on in *Tyrannosaur*. It belongs to a tradition of peculiarly dark British dramas produced by successful working-class actors-turned-directors, a tradition exemplified by Gary Oldman's *Nil by Mouth* and Peter Mullan's own *NEDS*. There's a kind of statement being made here – a self-conscious shrugging-off of thespian success, and an overzealous reassertion of working-class identity. *Tyrannosaur* is Considine's way of proving that he's not 'gone Hollywood' – that he's still Paddy from the block.

It's there in the romantic mythologizing of working-class values; the honesty of these hard, troubled lives that is directly contrasted with the dishonest and hidden hypocrisies of the aspirant middle-classes. There's a part of *Tyrannosaur* that is happy to trade in suburban clichés – the housewife who survives on a glass of wine, the unhappy marriage, the cutthroat bitterness of disappointment. What separates Hannah from Joseph isn't his capacity for violence, but her's for self-deception, and this latter is judged far more harshly than the former.

This, however, is a conceptual issue in a film that succeeds through raw emotional power. *Tyrannosaur* is a hugely confident and accomplished debut from Paddy Considine. Did he just become the new Shane Meadows? **Matt Bochenski**

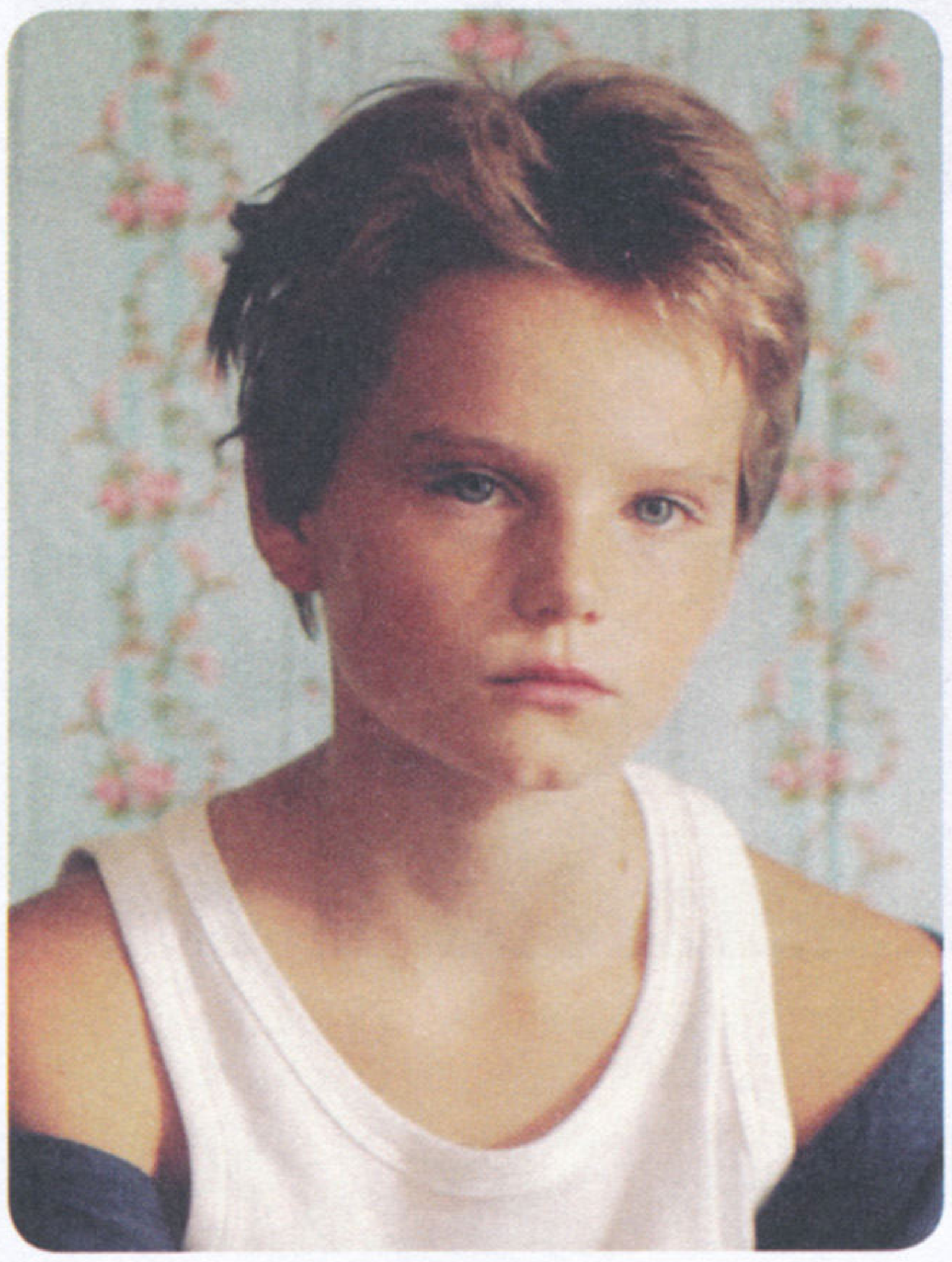
Anticipation. Great buzz from Sundance, where Mullan and Colman won a Special Jury Prize. **4**

Enjoyment. Vivid, bruising and electrifying. **4**

In Retrospect. But also possesses a sentimental undertone that some may question. **3**

Tomboy

Directed by ***Céline Sciamma***
Starring ***Zoé Héran, Malonn Lévana, Jeanne Disson***
Released ***September 16***



Having made an international splash with *Water Lilies*, an assured coming-of-age tale set in the world of synchronised swimming, French director Céline Sciamma successfully revisits its themes of adolescence and burgeoning sexuality.

There is definitely something boyish about 10-year-old Laure (Zoé Héran), who has recently moved to a new neighbourhood with her parents and younger sister. It's summer and all the other local children are playing outside. Laure's loneliness is breached when she meets Lisa (Jeanne Disson), who adopts Laure into her circle of friends believing her to be a boy. Laure becomes Michaël, and no sooner has she brought about this 'transformation' than she begins joining in with the frequently boisterous activities.

As time passes, Laure's relationship with Lisa becomes increasingly close, making the ambiguity of her situation ever more complicated. But the approaching school term and a number of creeping concerns threaten to shatter Laure/Michaël's hard-won status and tranquillity.

Rejecting the more traditional second feature route of increased finance and resources, Sciamma instead adopted a less-is-more approach, scaling back her budget and working with a minimal crew. Creating an incredible sense of intimacy and immediacy – shooting over just 20 summer days and in a time period that ran just three months from script completion to the start of production – Sciamma creates a vivid and naturalistic chronicle of childhood, replete with its codes of conduct.

Working from a simple colour palette and drawing on documentary disciplines (the Dardennes are a point of reference), the director forsakes the enclosed world of changing rooms and swimming pools that dominated *Water Lilies* for a more bucolic environment of lakes and parks.

Sciamma also adds subjects surrounding identity and the question of gender to her ingredients, marking *Tomboy* as a somewhat unique and singular exercise. As with so many aspects of the film, the casting and handling of the almost exclusively non-professional child actors is impeccable. Newcomer Héran is a revelation, and the decision to cast her real-life friends adds both to the drama, the camaraderie and the film's implicit and quite incredible chemistry. **Jason Wood**

Anticipation. The follow-up to the highly regarded *Water Lilies*. **4**

Enjoyment. Touching, tender and true. **4**

In Retrospect. Confirms Sciamma as one of the brightest young voices in French cinema. **4**

Crazy, Stupid, Love.

Directed by ***Glenn Ficarra, John Requa***
Starring ***Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Julianne Moore***
Released ***September 23***

What would you do if you found out your spouse was cheating on you and wanted a divorce? For Cal Weaver (Steve Carell), throwing himself from a moving car is a natural reaction to such disgruntling news.

Just as Cal hits tarmac bottom, however, blond and bronzed Ryan Gosling comes along to pick him up and polish him into a perfectly eligible bachelor. Gosling is Jacob, an effortless ladies' man who prowls around swanky bars armed with the kind of killer lines no woman can resist. Jacob sniffs a challenge in the baggy-eyed and wretched Cal, who, it's fair to say, is more Bassett Hound than tomcat.

So Jacob becomes Cal's very own Mr Miyagi, mentoring him in the fine art of luring the laydees – lose the sneakers; ditch the wallet; stop talking about the ex; and never, under any circumstances, drink a pink drink through a straw. Cal's transformation from loser to lothario is truly hilarious, yet his secret nighttime ventures to his ex-wife's garden (this is not a euphemism – he just wants to put the correct fertiliser on the flowers) serve as a reminder that, beneath the new designer suit, there still beats a broken heart.

In a somewhat unexpected twist, what appears to be a film about the pedestrian pitfalls of divorce gradually becomes one about the unequivocal sanctity of true love. *Crazy, Stupid, Love.* retains a touching faith in romance, and does so without the sentimentality one might expect.

In fact, with plenty of silly subplots involving teenage crushes, babysitters and one-night stands – not to mention an on-song Kevin Bacon as the accountant who makes a cuckold of our pitiful hero, and Emma Stone as the unlikely gal who turns our bad boy good – this sweet-as-pie rom-com has been smartly repackaged in a modern box.

Crazy, Stupid, Love. is a refreshing parable about finding your soul mate, done in a way guaranteed to leave you laughing, rather than barfing. **Zara Miller**

Anticipation. The title makes it sounds like any other rom-com from the last decade. But the high-quality cast gives pause for thought. **3**

Enjoyment. A hilarious insight into the world of dating, with a lorra, lorra laughs to be had. **4**

In Retrospect. Hollywood, you've done yourself proud here. **4**

Kill List

Directed by ***Ben Wheatley***
Starring ***Neil Maskell,***
MyAnna Buring, Harry Simpson
Released ***September 2***

British writer/director Ben Wheatley definitively made the jump from commercials to full-blown features after the success of last year's micro-budget, Brighton-set thriller *Down Terrace*. Now he's taken another stellar leap forward with this simply stunning follow-up. With an ambitious reach that once again confounds the constraints of the UK's underfunded indie scene, Wheatley has pulled off a horror/thriller mash-up for way less than a million quid.

The bleak hills of Sheffield provide a suitably ominous backdrop to this subversive vision of suburban life, in which we're introduced to a pair of ex-soldiers-turned-washed-up assassins for hire. Jay (Neil Maskell) and Gal (Michael Smiley) are talking in hushed tones about a botched job in Kiev, and weighing up the pros and cons of accepting another 'kill list' of anonymous targets from a mysterious employer who seals the deal with blood. Like travelling salesmen re-imagined as grim reapers, southern geezer Jay and sweet-talking Irishman Gal go about their business with ruthless efficiency.

The rapid-fire chatter between these two hangdog hitmen hamstrung by booze and blind loyalty soon segues into sequences of extreme carnage ("Don't just mow him down in a hail of bullets like some Hackney crackhead!"). But as the corpses pile up, the paranoia kicks in for Jay, who, fearing for his family, suddenly grows a conscience. Before long, events have spiralled out of control in a flurry of crushed skulls and point-blank executions.

What follows is a blistering denouement that's not for the squeamish. Delivering an intense reveal to rival Russian roulette psychodrama *13 Tzameti*, *Kill List* is precision calibrated to put audiences through an emotional wringer.

Jay's journey from alcoholic ex-serviceman suffering from post-traumatic stress to raging killer drags him and his best pal deeper into a world overshadowed by the occult. Not for Wheatley the empty swagger of a Hollywood carve-'em-up. Like Korean thriller *Oldboy*, *Kill List* takes us to the dark side of a moral wasteland from which there's no safe return. **Dan Brightmore**

Anticipation. Another murky British thriller, but this one's from the maker of *Down Terrace*. **3**

Enjoyment. A supreme cinematic definition of white-knuckle tension. A future classic from Ben Wheatley. **5**

In Retrospect. You might have quibbles with a distorted final act, but Wheatley's filmic puzzle will reward repeat viewings. **4**

You Instead

Directed by ***David Mackenzie***
Starring ***Luke Treadaway,***
Natalia Tena, Mathew Baynton
Released ***September 16***

Adam (Luke Treadaway) is a rock star. He's in Scotland with band mate and best friend Tyko (Mathew Baynton) to play T in the Park. Once there, he gets into an argument with Morello (Natalia Tena), lead singer of a fem-rock band. Morello hates Adam's sense of entitlement, and he mocks her lack of success.

A passing security guard, who strikes an oddly shamanic figure, chastises the two musicians for their aggression and handcuffs them together. With the key to the handcuffs nowhere to be found, Adam and Morello must now negotiate the festival, play their respective sets and maintain their relationships while joined at the hipster.

Tena plays Morello with huge energy and charm. She initially reacts to her predicament in the best tradition of a screwball heroine by running around trying to do everything at once and thus accomplishing nothing. While Adam reacts to this behaviour with a certain amount of incredulity, mostly he just trails after her.

The situation neither worsens nor improves. The pair simply remain handcuffed together until the security guard comes back and tells them where the key is. Shooting on location, the great temptation for director David Mackenzie was to get lost in the atmosphere of the event rather than pursue a concerted narrative. It's one he's proven unable to resist.

Still, there are highlights. One sees Adam and Morello singing a duet during her band's set. Adam is supposed to be a bystander during the show but – ever the musician and performer – is compelled to join in. As musicians, they complement each other perfectly and the close up camera work captures the sexiness of their situation. It's unfortunate that this chemistry and connection doesn't extend tomore scenes.

Mackenzie captures the energy and spirit of the festival, detailing a compelling world in which this rock 'n' roll romance unfolds. Unfortunately, Adam and Morello are mere mannequins against this backdrop rather than real characters about whom there is a story to be told. **Orla Cunnane**

Anticipation. A music festival is a great backdrop for a modern British love story. **3**

Enjoyment. Two people making the best of a bad situation is pragmatic, but it's not a story. **2**

In Retrospect. Less fun at the festival and more time on the characters, please. **2**

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Morgan Spurlock

Sell Out?

Interview by ***Ed Andrews***

Filmography

Morgan Spurlock

POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold *(2011)*
Freakonomics *(2010)*
Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden? *(2008)*
Super Size Me *(2004)*

Morgan Spurlock isn't selling out; he's buying in. That's the excuse he's giving for the plethora of sponsors that have tagged their corporate logos and slogans all over his new documentary *POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*.

Steeping itself in many layers of irony, the film sees Spurlock exploring the nature of corporate sponsorship and advertising in film and television shows by selling every second of screen time to brands to fund the film – while making a documentary about the whole process. Among the 21 brands that signed up to gain Spurlock's tongue-in-cheek endorsement were Carmex lip balm, Mini Cooper, airline JetBlue and hoteliers Hyatt – all proving that there is no such thing as bad publicity.

It may seem like a spurious claim for Spurlock to make when he is waving products and brand logos in front of the camera, but this cause is something that he believes is worth all the accusations of co-option. "Advertising *is* manipulative, it's sole purpose is to get you to buy something," says Spurlock cheerily as he hands over a bottle of headline sponsor POM Wonderful's pomegranate juice during the interview. "That's the whole idea of the film: manipulation and getting you to understand how this manipulation works. When you leave this movie you will want a POM Wonderful; you'll be thinking about Mane 'n Tail [a human-horse crossover shampoo]; you'll be thinking about JetBlue; and hopefully you'll start to be upset by how much that manipulation works."

This in-movie 'manipulation' is big business: think *Transformers 3*'s poorly-scripted praise of the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG sports car or Daniel Craig's 'I'm an Omega man' moment in *Casino Royale*. What actors eat, drink, drive or use onscreen is not so much a matter for the props department as the production company's sales team – and it's an industry that's worth billions. Contractual obligations and promotional tie-ins are inherently necessary for studios to claw back their multi-million dollar investments in blockbusters.

"Every time I get in a cab or on a bus or an elevator, when I pump gas or I stand in front of a urinal, there's somebody trying to sell me something. And then [I'm watching a movie] and suddenly I feel like I'm watching a commercial – like somebody would say out of nowhere something like, 'Just Bing it!' I was like, 'Who talks this way? Nobody says this'," explains Spurlock of his motivation for tackling this topic. "So I think it was a combination of all those things, with the final incident being an episode of *Heroes* where Hayden Panettiere raves about the Nissan Rogue her dad just gave her – it was pretty unbelievable."

While directors such as JJ Abrams, Brett Ratner and Peter Berg were all willing to go on record about the impact of this major money-spinner on their creative freedom, the faces in front of the cameras were not so keen to stick the boot in. "I really wanted to talk to an actor who had to do a scene with some sort of product placement in it, and no actor would talk to us. Not one," says Spurlock. "It was pretty amazing and very telling that they wouldn't."

This is hardly surprising when you consider that the likes of Megan Fox are being paid undisclosed seven figure sums for endorsing Armani underwear; or one-time Che Guevara Benicio Del Toro is acting out a heist for Magnum as part of a $3-million campaign; and then there's Natalie Portman's post-*Black Swan* posing for Dior, worth a reputed $22 million. "For me, transparency is really important," says Spurlock. "The goal behind the film was to kind of pull the curtain back and show you the machinations of the whole [sponsorship] process: how the whole thing works and why it works."

With this in mind, what you see on screen is a condensed version of nine months of pitching and rejection that Spurlock went through before the first sponsor, Ban Deodorant, got on board with a pledge of $50,000. It also shows the legal wrangling with each sponsor (lasting on average four months) before contracts were signed, with Spurlock flat out refusing to give sponsors approval of the final cut. "I think the fact that we were able to get any brand to give us money to make this movie is a miracle," he admits. Although Spurlock also confesses that he compromised on some points, he's adamant that he didn't 'sell out' as he fiercely guarded creative control of the film.

But compromising himself is very much Spurlock's style, as seen in his previous day-glo exposés *Super Size Me* and *Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden?*, where the director put himself at the centre of the narrative, making his ordeals the vehicle that carried the film. While he may not have physically compromised himself in this instance, the grinning, self-aware endorsements and crass sell-everything mentality surely must have tainted his integrity to some degree?

"Well that's the whole point," he says, seemingly glad that it has been recognised. "I have become that subject in the film and hopefully that's what you'll see. You'll see the whole machine at work. You'll see the whole process of everybody trying to get you to buy something, including me."

But does that trouble him at all? "Absolutely not. I sleep like a baby every night," he laughs. "Surrounded by pomegranates, Carrera sunglasses and Merrell shoes inside my Mini Cooper."

POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold

Directed by ***Morgan Spurlock***
Starring ***Peter Berg, Paul Brennan, Noam Chomsky***
Released ***October 14***

Morgan Spurlock has always been one to throw himself into his documentaries – in a very literal sense – so it's unsurprising that this latest investigative outing should once again see him on a personal quest. This time, Spurlock is affably exploring the issue of advertising in film by making a documentary about his own efforts to raise several million dollars from advertising and product placement in order to make a documentary – this one.

The opening scene finds Spurlock pitching to a room of marketing suits, happily churning out his corporate sales spiel to sell the grand vision of *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold* – or as it's renamed after one successful million-dollar pitch, *POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold.*

As Spurlock so keenly explains throughout, the premise of his latest adventure is to pull back the curtain on advertising and sponsorship, while being completely transparent about the industry that subtly and unsubtly feeds you logos and in-script brand messages along with your popcorn. And so, in that spirit, Spurlock conspicuously stays in a Hyatt hotel suite while on an excursion to explore the ban on outdoor advertising in São Paulo; conducts interviews with academics and consumer researchers in Sheetz gas stations and JetBlue terminals; and even slots a fully-scripted advert for POM Wonderful into a narrative on brands' deliberately misleading advertising.

At times, it seems like Spurlock has pulled off a minor creative coup, convincing brands to back a documentary that fundamentally questions their commercial ethics. But unfortunately, the director's lightweight style of investigation simply can't add enough journalistic gravitas to stop the film sinking under the weight of its own irony.

While Spurlock stresses that both he and his lawyers fought tooth-and-nail to keep creative control, the fact that he delivers the tongue-in-cheek promotional messages of the film's sponsors so convincingly means it's hard not to question whether he's just taken the money and started running.

Another stumbling block is that there doesn't seem to be a direct target for his scrutiny. The broad idea that Hollywood films and TV are awash with covert adverts may well be a good starting point, but we aren't taken any deeper down the rabbit hole. The end result is simply a few facts and figures you probably could have guessed yourself.

At one point, Spurlock does drift off to consider the rampant commercialisation of schools – a topic that perhaps he'd do better focusing the whole film on – but he ends that line of enquiry by cheerily buying some advertising banners for his film to put outside the school playing field. This final undermining gesture merely serves as a brief distraction from the huge amount of fun he's having as an unconventional corporate poster boy.

But by far the most annoying aspect of *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold* is that by the time it's over, you'll be consciously craving half the products that Spurlock has been so keen to hawk, meaning that those nasty marketing suits have actually won after all. **Ed Andrews**

Anticipation. Another chance for Spurlock to prove he's not a one-trick pony. 4

Enjoyment. Oh the delicious, self-referential irony. 3

In Retrospect. Who's up for some delicious pomegranate juice? Wait… Shit! 3

Miss Bala

Directed by ***Gerardo Naranjo***
Starring ***Stephanie Sigman, Irene Azuela, Miguel Couturier***
Released ***October 28***

Gerardo Naranjo's 2008 tale of young lovers on the run, *I'm Gonna Explode*, introduced audiences to an energising new voice in Latin cinema. Now, the Mexican writer/director is using his enhanced international reputation as a soapbox to sound off against his country's rotting core.

Inevitably echoing the earlier films of Alejandro González Iñárritu and Alfonso Cuarón, *Miss Bala* is an emphatic swan dive into the lawless machinery of Mexican politics that plays out under a hail of bullets and moral chaos. The story centres on the Dantean demise of Laura Guerrero (first-timer Stephanie Sigman), a smouldering, cash-strapped young woman who dreams of winning the Miss Baja California pageant.

After getting caught up in a massacre at a local nightclub with her friend Jessica (Irene Azuela), Laura is snatched by a radical gang who exploit her good looks by rigging the pageant vote and using their newly crowned hostage to snare their number one mark. Quite why Naranjo punishes his gutsy heroine so mercilessly from start to finish isn't clear, but a few cursory allusions towards her Western aspirations – posters of Audrey Hepburn and Madonna adorn her bedroom walls – are apparently enough to validate putting her through the mill. The irony is that Naranjo's high-octane disposition will surely flash up on Hollywood's radar.

Sigman carries herself gracefully in what is a demanding and at times demoralising role, but every drop of sweat and tear she sheds is washed away by the heavy-handed symbolism Naranjo employs to depict the socio-political typhoon that's devastating his homeland. Laura *is* Mexico, fucked from every angle (quite literally in one scene) by the bitter and bloody feud that continues to rage between the state and organised crime.

A few genuinely breathtaking set pieces – shot in single takes and choreographed to perfection – do just enough to distinguish *Miss Bala* from other, less dolled up, South American dramas (*Los Bastardos* and *Elite Squad* spring to mind), but its impact is blunter than expected. Naranjo is a filmmaker worth watching, though. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. Gerardo Naranjo with a sorrowful ode to Mexico. **3**

Enjoyment. Some fine moments, but skin-deep splendour. **3**

In Retrospect. Clumsy symbolism undermines a tenacious performance from newcomer Sigman. **2**

Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

Directed by ***Troy Nixey***
Starring ***Katie Holmes, Guy Pearce, Bailee Madison***
Released ***October 7***

While the horror genre is always moving forward, sometimes it also takes stock and looks back. And so *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* revisits a 1973 teleplay of the same name, and also disinters long-buried tropes from the Gothic, the fairy tale and the creature feature.

"I accept that my daughter has problems, but they do not involve monsters in the basement," says distracted architect Alex (Guy Pearce) to his interior designer/new girlfriend Kim (Katie Holmes) about young Sally (the excellent Bailee Madison). Forced to live in the beautiful old mansion that Alex and Kim are restoring, Sally feels homesick and unloved – and starts telling tales (and drawing pictures) of the photophobic creatures living downstairs.

Naturally, Alex supposes that these are a product of his daughter's anxious imagination – but he, unlike us, has not seen the film's prologue in which the house's original designer, Emerson Blackwood (Garry McDonald), is snatched away by denizens of the dark. So it is left to Kim to overturn her designated role as 'evil stepmother' and uncover the mansion's secrets.

Lush production design, grandiose camerawork, impeccably realised CGI 'homunculi' and flawless performances all combine here to create an elegantly crafted supernatural psychodrama. Troy Nixey, best known as a comic-book artist, puts a distinctive stamp on his feature debut with a wonderfully spooky animated title sequence, and a focus on the graphic arts (Sally, Kim and Blackwood are all illustrators).

Yet in other respects, the film bears all the hallmarks of its co-writer and co-producer Guillermo del Toro, with its child protagonist (as in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*), its vicious variant on the tooth fairy (as in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*), and its high-end production values that lend it a classic feel. It is a considerable achievement for a first-time director.

The film's one relative shortcoming is that it lacks the sort of political allegory that marks the best of del Toro's projects. Here, one family's emotional fragmentation is all – and those in search of bigger themes or broader resonances will be left in the dark. **Anton Bitel**

Anticipation. Del Toro is a proven horror brand. **4**

Enjoyment. This haunted house is classically constructed. **4**

In Retrospect. But ultimately its corridors are a little empty. **3**

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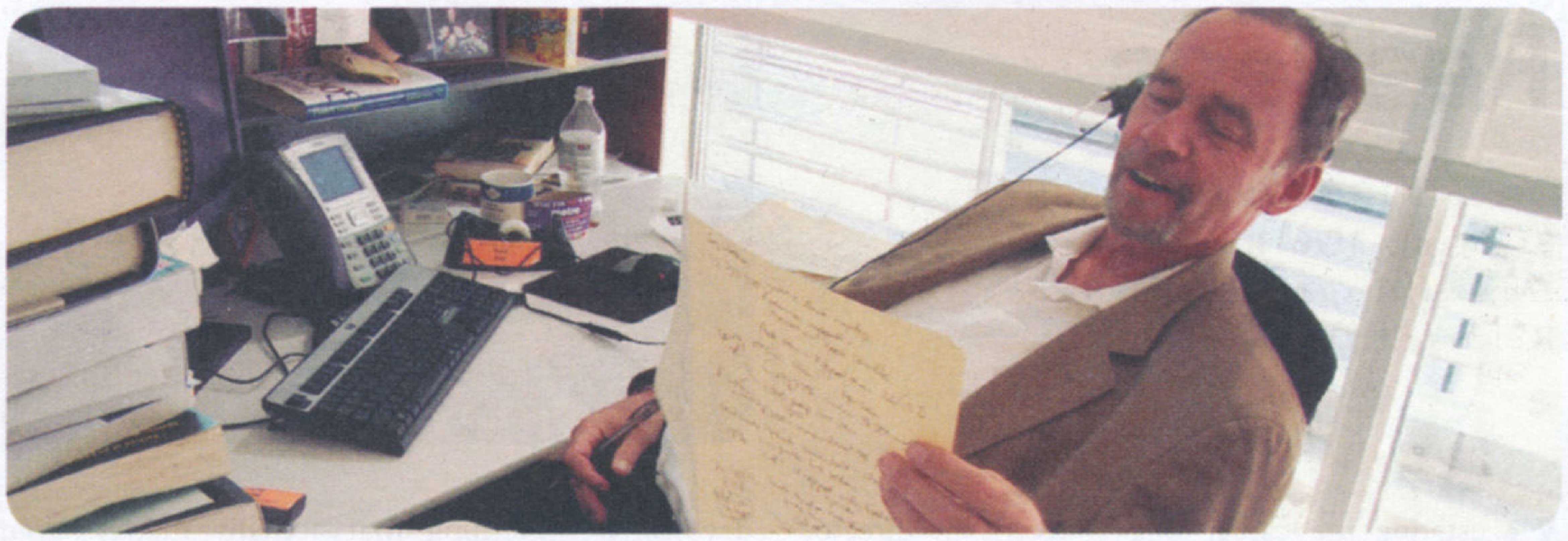
Page One: A Year Inside the New York Times

Directed by ***Andrew Rossi***
Starring ***David Carr, Carl Bernstein, Bruce Headlam***
Released ***September 23***



You write what you know. The internet. Daily deadlines that became hourly deadlines. Cutbacks and vanishing print circulation. The woman on the obits desk that they made redundant (her badge reads: 'I'm not dead yet'). When you're a reporter on the media desk of the *New York Times* you know these things. And you write about them.

Filmmaker Andrew Rossi spent 14 months with the staff on the media desk of the *New York Times* – following the story of the people writing about themselves. He was there as the *NYT* lost 30 percent of its revenue in the space of a year. He followed star reporters like David Carr – a crack addict turned super snoop – as they performed the fine work of print journalism: chasing leads, challenging testimony, breaking stories. He filmed as these stories reached an audience of 900,000 through the paper. Then he filmed the *NYT* journalist's reaction to the roughly edited Wikileaks *Collatoral Murder* video ("They just dropped it off on YouTube and waited for everyone to find it"), which has clocked 11 million hits to date.

In a few decades time there will be a great documentary to be made about today's print media. Right now, trying to capture the state of the industry on film is as futile as trying to report breaking news through print. It's not Rossi's fault that his doc's focus is all over the place – he's following the narrative thread of his subject, which leads to an analysis of the decline of traditional media. And an exposé on Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. And a tutorial on the history of the *New York Times*. And a lesson on how a big news story is broken. All at the same time. Quickly. Now.

There's no time for character, no time for contemplation. Just the steady trundle of a story playing itself out, and the desperate whir of Rossi's camera trying to catch his little part of it. The result is patchy, intense and slightly humourless. A snapshot memorandum of an industry declining faster than film can track it. **Henry Barnes**

Anticipation. The Gray Lady is a paper of note facing serious challenges from new media competitors. **3**

Enjoyment. A wandering, unfocused approximation of a story in motion. **2**

In Retrospect. It's not Rossi's fault that his medium can't keep up with his story. **2**

Midnight in Paris

Directed by ***Woody Allen***
Starring ***Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Marion Cotillard***
Released ***October 7***

For a filmmaker as wildly inconsistent as Woody Allen, it's logical that his most gratifying offering in recent memory is also his safest. *Midnight in Paris* is as light and powdered as French pastry, but it's made of more discerning stuff than March's ensemble dud *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger* and the overrated *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. Here, through the idyllic prism of the City of Light, Allen goes on a pastel-tinted nostalgia trip that romanticises the past without losing sight of the present.

Owen Wilson and Rachel McAdams play a well-heeled couple who have come to Paris to shop and sightsee ahead of their wedding. Self-confessed 'Hollywood hack' Gil's (Wilson) cultural hopscotch is impeded by materialistic fiancé Inez (McAdams) and her conservative parents, who openly sniff at Gil's giddy idealism. Then one night, after a tiff with his spouse-to-be, Gil stumbles into an apparent time warp and the Parisian 'Golden Age' he yearns to know appears. The 1920s roar back into life.

These recurring midnight flings – where Gil is transported seamlessly to another era to dine, dance and ruminate with his literary idols – are charmingly rendered by Allen. But it's Wilson who really makes these vignettes sparkle, riffing off the unbridled fancy of Allen's script and injecting some charisma into the director's familiarly neurotic surrogate.

The self-absorbed subtext is a little hard to swallow at times, but it's impossible not to get lost in the cameo-laden bliss of each round of scotch with Ernest Hemingway (Corey Stoll) and every swing with Zelda Fitzgerald (Alison Pill). Yet while it's a shame whenever Gil (and, by extension, the audience) is inevitably yanked back into reality, his reconnection with the real world ensures that Allen's inference that navel-gazing and sanctifying the good ol' days is a futile pursuit hits its mark. *Midnight in Paris* isn't a clutch at yesteryear after all; it's a statement that Allen still has something left to say. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. We're all going on a Woody holiday. **2**

Enjoyment. An absurdly charming and unexpected return to form. **3**

In Retrospect. If Allen's next stop on his Euro tour is anywhere near this enjoyable, consider our bags packed. **3**

Restless

Directed by ***Gus Van Sant***
Starring ***Mia Wasikowska,***
Henry Hopper, Ryo Kase
Released ***October 21***

Restating the career-long concerns of director Gus Van Sant – adolescent alienation, anxiety and anomie – *Restless* may be determinedly, even defiantly, generic, but in its astute mix of whimsy and tenderness, it manages to capture something both unexpected and quietly affecting.

Henry Hopper makes a bold impression in his feature debut, channelling the laconic cool of his late father, Dennis, but also something of the off-kilter charisma of *Gilbert Grape*-era DiCaprio. He plays Enoch Brae, an orphaned loner whose only friend is Hiroshi (Ryo Kase), the ghost of a Japanese kamikaze pilot. Enoch gets his kicks by posing as a mourner at strangers' funerals, which is where me meets kindred spirit Annabel (Mia Wasikowska).

The pair make a connection that helps each of them deal with the very real tragedies they face. And that's the thing about *Restless* – it's not asking you to feel sorry for California rich kids with boyfriend issues; it's showing you, with arch humour and dry irony, something that actually matters. Van Sant may have been guilty in the past of indie filmmaking-by-numbers (*Paranoid Park*) or populist sentimentality (*Milk*), but here the mannered tone is a well-judged response to the emotional weight that settles elsewhere.

And yet none of it would work without the performances of Hopper and Wasikowska, who once again demonstrates flawless taste in collaborators and an excellent sense of her own strengths as a performer. Not even Carey Mulligan can match her run since last year's breakthrough in *Alice in Wonderland*, while upcoming parts in John Hillcoat's *The Wettest County in the World* and Park Chan-wook's *Stoker* suggest it's only going to get better from here.

Like the film as whole, Wasikowska's performance shouldn't work, and yet something clicks into place. Where Sean Penn's Harvey Milk could only muster pomposity in the face of adversity, Wasikowska's quiet, unaffected humility leads *Restless* to a compassionate and truthful conclusion which, against odds, instinct and better judgment, will leave you discretely wiping away a tear. **Matt Bochenski**

Anticipation. Van Sant, Wasikowska and Dennis Hopper's kid. Indie alert! Indie alert! **3**

Enjoyment. Top-class performances and a finely calibrated tone make *Restless* an unexpectedly moving proposition. **4**

In Retrospect. Henry Hopper just moved to the top of our 'Dude, You're Awesome!' chart. **3**

The Help

Directed by ***Tate Taylor***
Starring ***Emma Stone,***
Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer
Released ***October 28***

A superb ensemble and neat balance of humour and pathos sees *The Help* exceeds its apparent limitations as 'Movie of the Week' material.

College graduate Eugenia 'Skeeter' Phelan (Emma Stone) is determined to break into journalism, despite the opposition of a cancer-stricken mother (Allison Janney) and airhead friends who'd rather play bridge than raise their own children. Appalled by the blithe prejudice of her peers towards their African-American maids, Skeeter conspires with veteran servant Aibileen (Viola Davis) to put the truth about the hired help of Mississippi's middle classes into print.

Handsomely shot and with sumptuous production design by Mark Ricker, *The Help* certainly feels like a document of a brave blow for civil rights. The oppressive heat of the Deep South shimmers from the screen, with Stone's locks credibly frizzed from the humidity – though putting her in glasses won't convince viewers she'd struggle to find a boyfriend.

It's touching and often hilarious – thanks to the splendid Octavia Spencer and Jessica Chastain – but *The Help*'s rigid conformity disappoints. Skeeter and Aibilene's project is compelling enough to carry the film and needn't have been ignored so often for a predictable subplot about Skeeter's love-life. And while there's a hint of grit in nods to domestic violence and the real-life assassination of activist Medgar Evers, director Tate Taylor seems more concerned with fashioning a tidy, heart-warming tale than tackling the unthinking racism of Mississippi's wealthy white population.

Where *The Help* excels, though, is in its performances. Stone's career is rightly rocketing, Bryce Dallas Howard adds manic physicality to a one-dimensional villain, and Janney is always a joy.

But Taylor's trump card is Davis, who is employed to stunning effect. She is magnificent, full of subtle nobility, conveying years of pain with a faltering nod.

It's not that *The Help* is a mawkish film, it's just that it's never especially complex or provocative. But with enjoyable comedy and characters, and the devastating brilliance of Davis, it's an elegant and engaging tearjerker. **Lewis Bazley**

Anticipation. The Walt Disney version of the civil rights movement, surely? **2**

Enjoyment. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be bewitched by Viola Davis. **3**

In Retrospect. Terrifically performed, with enough humour and heart that you'll ignore its flaws. **3**

We Need to Talk About Kevin

Directed by ***Lynne Ramsay***
Starring ***Tilda Swinton, John C Reilly, Ezra Miller***
Released ***October 21***

Five minutes into Lynne Ramsay's provocative adaptation of Lionel Schriver's unsettling novel about the aftereffects of a Columbine-style massacre, we are plunged into the subconscious of the eponymous killer's mother, Eva (Tilda Swinton), in a bravura dream sequence set in Valencia's La Tomatina festival. Held aloft by a mass of writhing bodies, her wan skin stained with tomato flesh, she glides gracefully to a parting in the crowd before being set down in a sea of red and consumed by it. It's a powerful image: one representative of the peace she longs to make with the life-shattering events of her recent past.

Back in reality, Eva's waking world is similarly bathed in red, though here it's a hue symbolic of police sirens and bleeding bodies, not rebirth, that covers her so completely. Whether hiding from a grieving parent in a supermarket, or scrubbing, Lady Macbeth-like, at paint thrown over her house by vandals, she's haunted by it everywhere she turns. This is a film so drenched in crimson, it's almost as if the negative itself has been steeped in blood in some sort of macabre post-production process.

Ramsay showcased her talent for visual storytelling and eye for arresting images in her earlier works *Ratcatcher* and *Morvern Callar*. It comes as little surprise, then, that she's jettisoned the source novel's decidedly literary narrative device of presenting Eva's thoughts as letters written to her estranged husband. Instead, she places us directly in the distraught woman's head as Eva digs through her memory searching for clues as to how and why she became the mother of a cold, distant sociopath. It's the nature versus nurture argument played out in a series of fraught, painful reminiscences.

Starting with the evening Kevin was conceived, Eva runs through her past in exhaustive, and exhausting, detail. Through these flashbacks we discover that her entire relationship with her son has been governed by a kind of hellish, prolonged post-natal depression. Initially unable to bond with him thanks to his non-stop crying, refusal to speak and toilet training problems, her resentment grows, reaching a seething peak when her good-natured husband (John C Reilly) convinces her to leave New York City and a successful career to help with Kevin's development.

Intercut with these flashbacks are snatches of Eva's current life, two years after the killings. Linked to her son's crime by name and an infamous TV newsreel, she's unable to escape the stigma of being the mother of the most hated 15-year-old in the country. Kevin continues to be the dominant force in her life despite being locked away in prison. Borrowing heavily from the grammar of horror films, Ramsay uses disorienting angles, stalking POV shots and grainy close-ups to mirror the turmoil in Eva's fractured psyche. Her expressive direction is matched by Swinton, faultless throughout, packing layers of nuance and emotion into every sigh and scowl. Together they combine to form a harrowing portrait of a grief-stricken mind in free fall that is as compelling as it is disturbing. **Jason Goodyer**

Anticipation. Lynne Ramsay's first film for nine years finally arrives with strong post-Cannes buzz. **4**

Enjoyment. A dizzying visual trip effortlessly anchored by Swinton's superlative central performance. **4**

In Retrospect. Ramsay has distilled the essence of the novel into a chilling and strikingly cinematic work of art. **4**

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PRESENTS

THE GREATEST MOVIE EVER SOLD

12A Contains infrequent strong language and moderate sex references

From **Morgan Spurlock**,
director of ***Super Size Me***

"Clever, fascinating and funny - dont miss it"
- Alan Frank, Daily Star

"Wickedly funny and thought-provoking ... I urge you to see it"
- Aintitcool

"Supersell Me! Spurlock does it again"
- GQ

"Immensely funny"
- Clash

"He makes you laugh till it hurts"
- Rolling Stone

He's not selling out, he's buying in

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Lars von Trier

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Antichrist (2009)
The Boss of it All (2006)
Manderlay (2005)
Dogville (2003)
Dancer in the Dark (2000)
The Idiots (1998)
Breaking the Waves (1996)

It's been two years since *LWLies* last met up with Lars von Trier. Since then, the depressed bad-boy genius of arthouse cinema has been pretty busy. He's had four letters tattooed on to his knuckles ('F', 'U', 'C', 'K'). He's made an apocalyptic movie called *Melancholia*. And he's managed to get himself banned from the Cannes Film Festival by casually telling a press conference that he's a Nazi ("What can I say? I understand Hitler…"). So there was lots to catch up on when we reunited with von Trier in May.

LWLies: So, obviously, you were only joking when you said you're a Nazi. **Von Trier**: I'm not Mel Gibson. I'm definitively not Mel Gibson. I'm the opposite. I've been to all these fucking concentration camps and I've been really interested. I think the Holocaust is the worst crime against humanity in my knowledge.

But it was a joke that went badly, right? I'm joking a lot… And journalists, even if you don't find it funny, you should see my intention… It's a matter of me putting things in a forum where they shouldn't be put. But write what you want. Someone wisely said, 'You can't wash yourself clean in ink.'

Why do you think everyone overreacted so much? I believe that it's an especially delicate subject in Cannes, because the French have a history of being extremely cruel to the Jews.

Dangerous to say those things… Everything I say is dangerous.

How did you feel about being banned for the remainder of the festival? I was officially *persona non grata*. And I don't think that has ever happened before in the history of Cannes. I'm very proud of being *persona non grata*. I've never been that in my life and it suits me very well. But I respect the Cannes Film Festival very much. They were very angry at me.

Do you regret saying it? It's a misunderstanding but it's an understandable misunderstanding. You can be mad at me, but it's nothing I think about. Which is maybe why I should be carried around in a little cage with something around my mouth and being shown to the press, because that's maybe more fair.

Do you think it's taken the spotlight off *Melancholia*? Yeah, that was completely stupid. Nobody has talked about the film and I don't give a shit about the film anymore. I'm just so tired.

Did making *Melancholia* help with your depression? No, I don't think it helped. But when you have a depression, the one cure is to get out of bed for two seconds. And the next day, you get out of bed for three seconds. So if you work creatively, it helps you. But I wouldn't say that it has helped me out of the crisis. I would put it the other way; that the crisis has been the material that I have used.

Where did the idea for the film come from? I think very much the title – it is such a good word in your mouth. And it's such an important thing in art and in very many aspects of human life, melancholia. My main task at the time was to write a film for Penélope Cruz, who contacted me and we met. And I said I would find a way into something that would be interesting for her and for me to do together.

What did you think of Penélope? She's a very, very nice girl. She was very interested in working with me, which I was very honoured by, and I saw a lot of her films and I met her. A lot of the script is written from the ideas that she and I had together. I said, 'What do you appreciate?' I had a scene with a horse refusing to go somewhere and being beaten. She said, 'That's interesting, I'm a very good horse rider.' Se we made little connection together.

Are you upset that she couldn't do the film? I'm not very sad that she didn't do it, because then you get something else. And then I found Kirsten, who I think worked extremely well.

Kirsten is almost the opposite of Penélope. Yeah, yeah. But then sometimes – like this episode that we shouldn't talk about – it's good to have some resistance. And the resistance in this film was that it was written for Penélope and she couldn't do it. Then there comes a clash between things that suddenly something new arises from.

Kirsten had recently come out of rehab. Do you think she has a special understanding of melancholy? Oh, absolutely. I don't know whether she had depression, but she had absolute knowledge of this. It's really difficult to show the transformation. Because when you are in this melancholy state, you are normally smiling a lot. But you're smiling in another way – there's nothing there when you look in their eyes. And I think she does that really well.

Are you taking any drugs for your depression right now? I'm on a very small pill for depression. I used to take a terrible pill that I found out doubled the alcohol effect by four. And if you knew what I've been drinking, then four is a lot.

There's a golf course in *Melancholia* with a Hole 19. Can you explain? Yes, Hole 19! That's where I am right now – in limbo!

You're working on an *Obstructions* film with Martin Scorsese, where you set him a series of filmmaking challenges. Can you tell us about it? I don't yet… It's really difficult, if you can give me some advice! It's really difficult to restrict a man who hasn't restricted himself at all. He's done so many different things. I don't know. We'll meet and talk about this and maybe he'll restrict me instead.

Can you give us some advice? Everything is going to hell, but we should smile all the way.

Melancholia

Directed by ***Lars von Trier***
Starring ***Kirsten Dunst, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Kiefer Sutherland***
Released ***September 30***

If filmmaking is therapy for Lars von Trier, you have to worry just how well his self-publicised battle with depression is going. A couple of months after Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* showed us the beginning of the universe, von Trier's ominously named *Melancholia* gives us the end of the world. It's a disaster movie. It's a double-disaster movie, in fact. It's Danish dogme classic *Festen* colliding with Hollywood meteor-melodrama *Deep Impact*.

Just as he did with horror-shocker *Antichrist*, von Trier opens with a gorgeous slo-mo prelude. A hypnotically beautiful image of Kirsten Dunst's face fills the screen, followed by a montage of strange, striking images. A golf course showing Hole 19. A distant galaxy. A horse stumbling. Dunst floating in water.

Then it begins for real, with a lovely, witty scene that proves to be better than much of what follows: a newly married couple, played by Dunst and *True Blood*'s Alexander Sarsgaard, struggle to reverse their car up a path. But if *Melancholia* promises to fluctuate deftly between the cosmic and the intimate, it actually proves to be as blunt as its two-handed structure.

Part I ('Justine') reveals Dunst to be a crushingly depressed woman whose lavish wedding rapidly peels apart along with her psyche. Part II ('Claire') sees her straight-laced sister Charlotte Gainsbourg and scientist husband Kiefer Sutherland discover that the mysterious planet Melancholia is on an apocalyptic crash-course with Earth.

As the giant planet brings death from above, looming larger and larger in the sky with magnetic metaphorical force, Gainsbourg shatters into a panic while Dunst accepts their fate with unnerving Zen.

Floating on tides of grandiose Wagnerian music, von Trier's cosmic spectacle is another fascinating dose of metaphor and therapy for his own much-talked-about and often-doubted private troubles. But the spurting blood, talking foxes and body horror of *Antichrist* have now been replaced with a strange calm that threatens to teeter into boredom.

Likewise, Dunst's performance – which won her a Best Actress award at Cannes, despite being written for Penélope Cruz – is too insular to fully engage the audience's empathy. No question, *Melancholia* is incredibly eerie, and is lent an exciting frisson by the authenticity of an actress and filmmaker with first-hand experiences of psychological trauma.

Everything, though, feels too far out of reach. Only Manuel Alberto Claro's beautiful, dreamy cinematography conjures up any sense of rapture. Is the entire planet heading towards blank oblivion? Or is it just inside von Trier's head? We're not too sure which would be worse. **Jonathan Crocker**

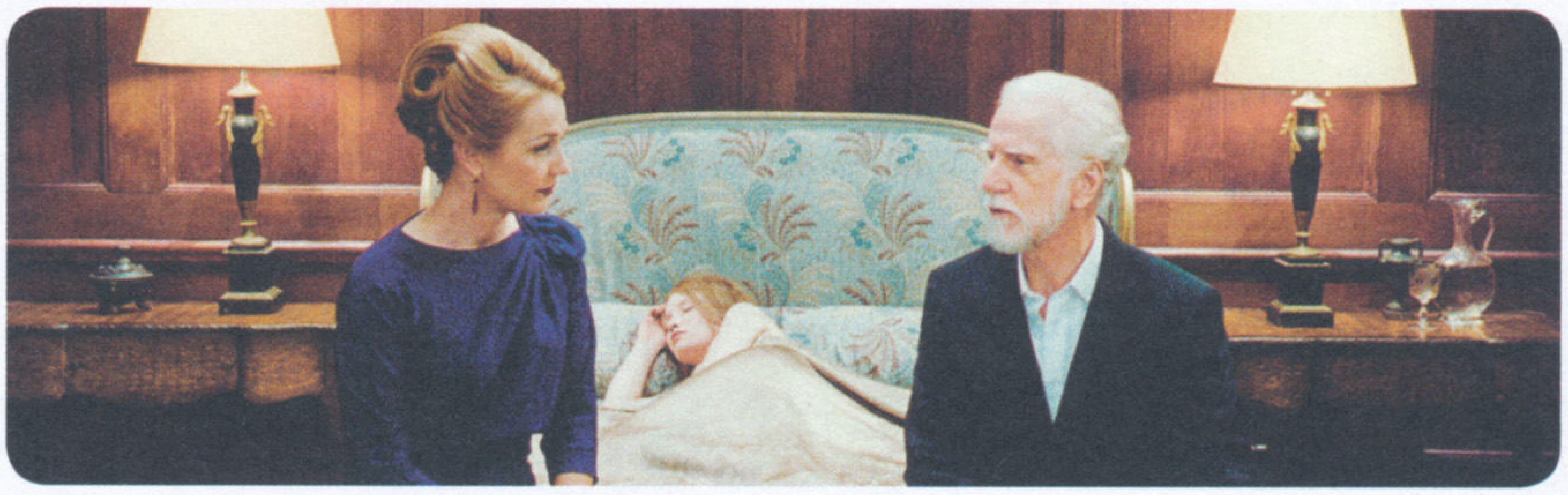
Anticipation. You can be sure of only one thing with LvT: it won't be boring. 4

Enjoyment. Is it just us, or is this a little bit boring? 2

In Retrospect. There's something powerful here, but *Melancholia* hasn't quite managed to force it through the screen. 3

Sleeping Beauty

Directed by ***Julia Leigh***
Starring ***Emily Browning, Rachael Blake, Ewen Leslie***
Released **October 14**



Perhaps Julia Leigh saw *Sleeping Beauty* slipping into bed alongside Pasolini's *Salò* and Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* as an aseptic, anti-erotic deconstruction of sexual power and politics.

But where those films suggested profound depths of meaning, metaphor and symbolism beneath their icy veneers, scratch the surface of *Sleeping Beauty* and all that's left are ugly marks.

Emily Browning offers a gutsy performance as Lucy, a troubled, impoverished but austerely beautiful university student who supports herself with shifts as a waitress but supplements that income volunteering for medical research.

We first meet her in an almost unwatchably realistic scene in which Lucy has a long rubber tube inserted down her throat to a soundtrack of guttural retching. But it's another kind of invasive procedure entirely that will become the focus of the film. Hired by a kind of upmarket escort agency for rich pervs, Lucy will spend her nights drugged and unconscious, a literal sleeping beauty fawned over by a succession of old men. Unknowingly violated (though never penetrated), Lucy is the object not so much of their lust, but their dejection, depression and despair. That pristine, alabaster body is the theatre of their humiliation, not hers.

No doubt, *Sleeping Beauty* is a handsomely staged production. In fact, it's so painfully deliberate, so studied and self-possessed that you can practically hear the life being sucked out of the frame. Leigh's penchant for fade-outs, slow zooms and flat, almost two-dimensional imagery results in a fatally arrhythmic experience that's long-winded, self-conscious and pseudo-profound. This is a film prat-falling over itself to be taken seriously.

All of which leaves Emily Browning high and dry. There are an awful lot of 22-year-old actresses making waves in cinema right now, but how many of them have the courage to go for broke in an Australian art film that strips them down both physically and emotionally? She's thrown herself body and soul at this project only to be left ill-served by her chief ally. This is a vision of innocence corrupted, indeed. **Matt Bochenski**

Anticipation. Granted the honour of competing at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. **4**

Enjoyment. An airless, lifeless experience despite the best efforts and intentions of its lead. **2**

In Retrospect. Not one to place among the classic studies of sexual politics. **2**

Albatross

Directed by ***Niall MacCormick***
Starring ***Sebastian Koch, Jessica Brown Findlay, Felicity Jones***
Released **October 14**

In the attic room of a yellow-brick guesthouse in a quaint south-coast town, a novelist is lost for words. Jonathan Fischer (Sebastian Koch) has built a reputable career on being beside the seaside, but this latest bout of writer's block has come with a nasty side effect of cold, hard reality. It's been decades since his last best-seller. He's washed up. His family and business are slowly drifting out of view.

Enter Emelia (Jessica Brown Findlay), a lippy, capricious teen who breezes into the Fischer abode like a gust of salty air, ruffling the feathers of clucky matriarch Joa (Julia Ormond) and befriending bookworm daughter Beth (Felicity Jones). A relative of Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle, Emelia has her own claim to literary fame and her passion for prose (read: minxy disposition) quickly catches Jonathan's eye.

The Lives of Others star Koch puts in a deceptively amiable performance, but it's newcomer Brown Findlay (who came close to landing the lead in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*) who steals it. Emelia may be the aggravator of the crisis, but Brown Findlay's spunky effervescence provides the perfect front for a character that commands deep empathy. Not just for the shadow cast over her by some distant branch of her family tree, but because her bolshy independence is in fact a means of lightening the sense of abandonment that hangs about her neck like a lodestone.

Like its tranquil shoreline setting, *Albatross* is a patchwork of British clichés. Think *Life is Sweet* meets *Fish Tank*, minus the sweet tooth and gritty social commentary. Yet only the most hardened cynic would deride director Niall MacCormick and writer Tamzin Rafn for distilling a domestic storm into a teacup. It might be a little too straightforward and soft around the edges, but it's rare to find a film with this much charm and sincerity. **Adam Woodward**

Anticipation. British dramedy goes to the seaside. **2**

Enjoyment. Strong performances give wings to a featherweight story. **3**

In Retrospect. Jessica Brown Findlay is an awesome young talent. **3**

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Troll Hunter

Directed by ***André Øvredal***
Starring ***Otto Jespersen, Robert Stoltenberg, Knut Nærum***
Released ***September 9***

With its big hairy feet planted firmly in two worlds, horror-comedy *Troll Hunter* strives for both titters and trembles. It's Norway's belated answer to *The Blair Witch Project*, as well as any number of CGI monster movies – a down-and-dirty mock doc shot entirely from the perspective of a hapless crew of student filmmakers. They're following huntsman Hans (Otto Jespersen), who's spent his life covertly tracking and killing trolls in the forests and mountains of western Norway.

As the title suggests, Hans is the star (Jespersen blends John Wayne bravado with Jeff Bridges charisma), but the real pin-ups are the trolls themselves. Stomping, mountainous hell-beasts, they're part Dahlian nightmare, part something else, divided into different species (Darwin would have a heart attack) and suitably savage in nature.

Less savage is Hunter's wit. The dry humour works in places (a troll can sniff out a Christian at 10 paces), and writer/director André Øvredal has fun playing around with fairytale mythology. Sadly, the arid nudge-winks only truly come into their own in Hunter's third act, early jokes either getting lost in translation or simply not hitting their mark.

More successful are *Hunter*'s shaky-cam action scenes. Thought *Blair Witch*'s careering camera was difficult to stomach? Hunter pushes the boundaries of topsy-turvy framing to the max – and though Øvredal had a budget that barely scraped the £2 million mark, his film doesn't scrimp on the thrills. Forest chases, cave stakeouts and one heck of a frosty finale all ensure that *Hunter* is no troll when it comes to set-pieces.

Last year, newbie director Gareth Edwards took guerrilla filmmaking to new highs with the made-for-peanuts *Monsters*. *Troll Hunter* takes the same equation – innocent nobodies minus big production values plus big beasties – and delivers something entirely different. *Monsters* turned out to be a love story. *Troll Hunter* turns out to be about hunting trolls; and not much else besides. **Josh Winning**

Anticipation. The memory of 1986 snorefest *Troll* is still fresh... **3**

Enjoyment. Shaky cam with subtitles might prove too much for some, but the trolls are a towering achievement. **4**

In Retrospect. Fun, funny and fearless. Hunt it out if you're after something different. **3**

Attenberg

Directed by ***Athina Rachel Tsangari***
Starring ***Ariane Labed, Yorgos Lanthimos, Vangelis Mourikis***
Released ***September 2***

Athina Rachel Tsangari began her career in film with a role in Richard Linklater's *Slacker* in 1991. Since then, she's made a micro-budget sci-fi road movie shot in nine cities around the world; programmed the politically engaged media section of Austin's Cinematexas International Short Film Festival; designed large-scale projections for dance and theatre installations; and founded a creative office – Haos – that develops and produces work with fellow Greek filmmakers. Yorgos Lanthimos' *Dogtooth* is just of one her credits.

Here she directs the story of 23-year-old Marina (Ariane Labed), who is growing up with her architect father in a prototype factory town. Finding the human species strange and repellent, she keeps her distance, observing it through the songs of Suicide, the documentaries of Sir David Attenborough (mispronounced and lending the film its title), and the sex education lessons she receives from her only friend, Bella (Evangelia Randou).

When an engineer (Yorgos Lanthimos) comes to town to complete a project, Marina is assigned the task of driving him around. After an ice-breaking table football duel, a relationship of sorts develops. Meanwhile, her terminally ill father ritualistically prepares for his exit from the twentieth century, which he considers to be 'overrated'. Caught between the two men and Bella, Marina begins to investigate for herself the wondrous mystery of the human fauna.

Attenberg retains an organic connection with the other films to emerge from Tsangari's Haos initiative. Many of the cast and crew are regular collaborators, while Lanthimos not only assumes the producer role but also gives a performance of genuine charm as the outsider who helps open Marina's eyes to a world she can actually engage with rather than dispassionately observe. Labed is simply terrific, avoiding the potential pitfall of affectation in a performance that earned her the Best Actress award at Venice.

Largely – though not entirely – eschewing the shock tactics of *Dogtooth*, *Attenberg* is arguably the superior work. A film about disconnectedness that combines intellectual and emotional rigour with a sardonic, often absurdist, black humour, it exudes both a refreshing innocence (despite being brutally frank on the subjects of death and sexuality) and bracing sense of discovery. **Jason Wood**

Anticipation. From the same stable as the highly regarded *Dogtooth*. **4**

Enjoyment. A film of constant and illuminating surprises. **4**

In Retrospect. Intelligent, inventive and incredibly engaging. **4**

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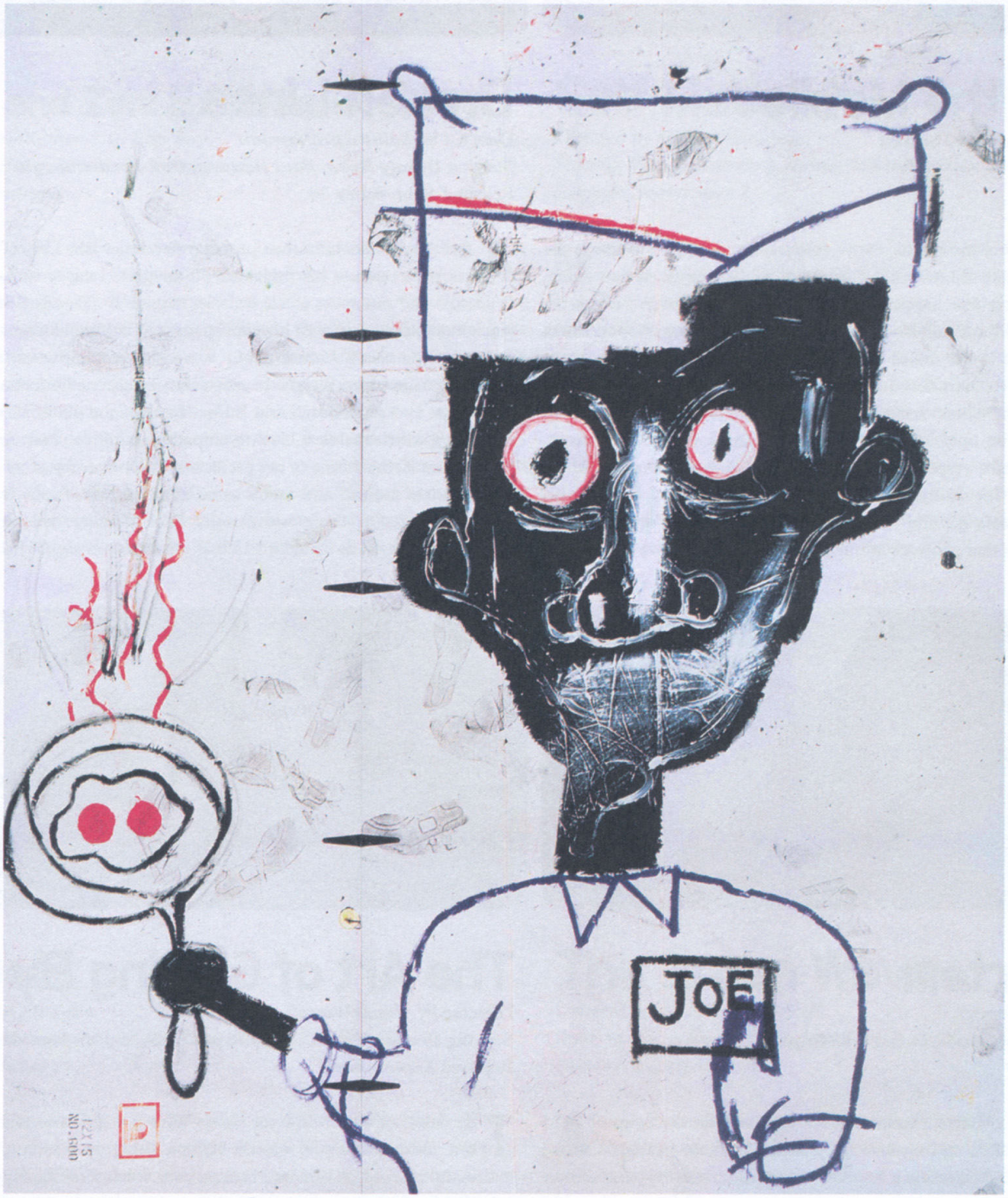

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Blood in the Mobile

Directed by ***Frank Piasechi Poulsen***
Released ***October 21***

Multinational corporations exploit native resources and peoples – this is the dark truth of capitalism. And *Blood in the Mobile* is a great, if harrowing, reminder of the suffering that happens in the name of 'civilisation'. Here, the target is Nokia, fingered for using 'blood minerals' in their mobile phones. Frank Piasechi Poulsen travels to the mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo to expose a process of extraction that not only violates countless human rights, but also funds a war in which armed groups rape, pillage and kill innocent citizens. Nokia aren't the only company to blame, but as Poulsen's network, he pressures them to take responsibility for the terrible conditions on which their prosperity is built. Inevitably, Poulsen is stonewalled at every turn, but his passion, perseverance, courage and journalistic integrity makes for a revealing doc – the human cost of that privilege in our pockets. **Shelley Jones** **2 3 4**

Broken Lines

Directed by ***Sallie Aprahamian***
Starring ***Doraly Rosa, Paul Bettany, Dan Fredenburgh***
Released ***September 30***

After the death of his father, property developer Jake Levy (Dan Fredenburgh) starts to reassess his priorities. He neglects long-term fiancée Zoe (Olivia Williams) and romances a café waitress named 'B' (Doraly Rosa), who is in turn stuck in a relationship with her semi-paralysed boyfriend Chester (Paul Bettany). Sallie Aprahamian's feature debut is a story of temptation versus obligation, of personal happiness weighed against duty to others. Unfortunately, the script – co-written by Fredenburgh and Rosa – fumbles the material. Jake's background is sketchy, which makes it hard to empathise with his crisis. And while we learn more about B, the drama of her predicament is muted by a lack of self-awareness: she blunders around and seems amazed when her actions lead to unwelcome consequences. On the positive side, Paul Bettany nails his scenes with a performance that's as unsentimental as it is highly charged. **Julian White** **3 2 2**

Post Mortem

Directed by ***Pablo Larraín***
Starring ***Alfredo Castro, Antonia Zegers, Amparo Noguera***
Released ***September 9***

Chilean director Pablo Larraín examines the Chilean military coup of 1973 through the prism of an unlikely love story. Mario Cornejo (Alfredo Castro) works in a morgue while beginning a tentative relationship with cabaret dancer Nancy (Antonia Zegers). However, the revolutionary events of the outside world throw both of their lives into chaos. This is an evocative work that strips back the noble ideals of revolution to show the terrible price paid by those caught in the crossfire. Larraín imbues proceedings with a dreamlike air, going from one surreal set-piece to another. A measured Castro is excellent as a loner who struggles to comprehend his relationships with other people, and his chemistry and interaction with Zegers – who also manages to put on a feisty performance – is compellingly twisted. A unique and weird history lesson created by a director whose star is continually on the rise. **Laurence Boyce** **3 4 4**

The Art of Getting By

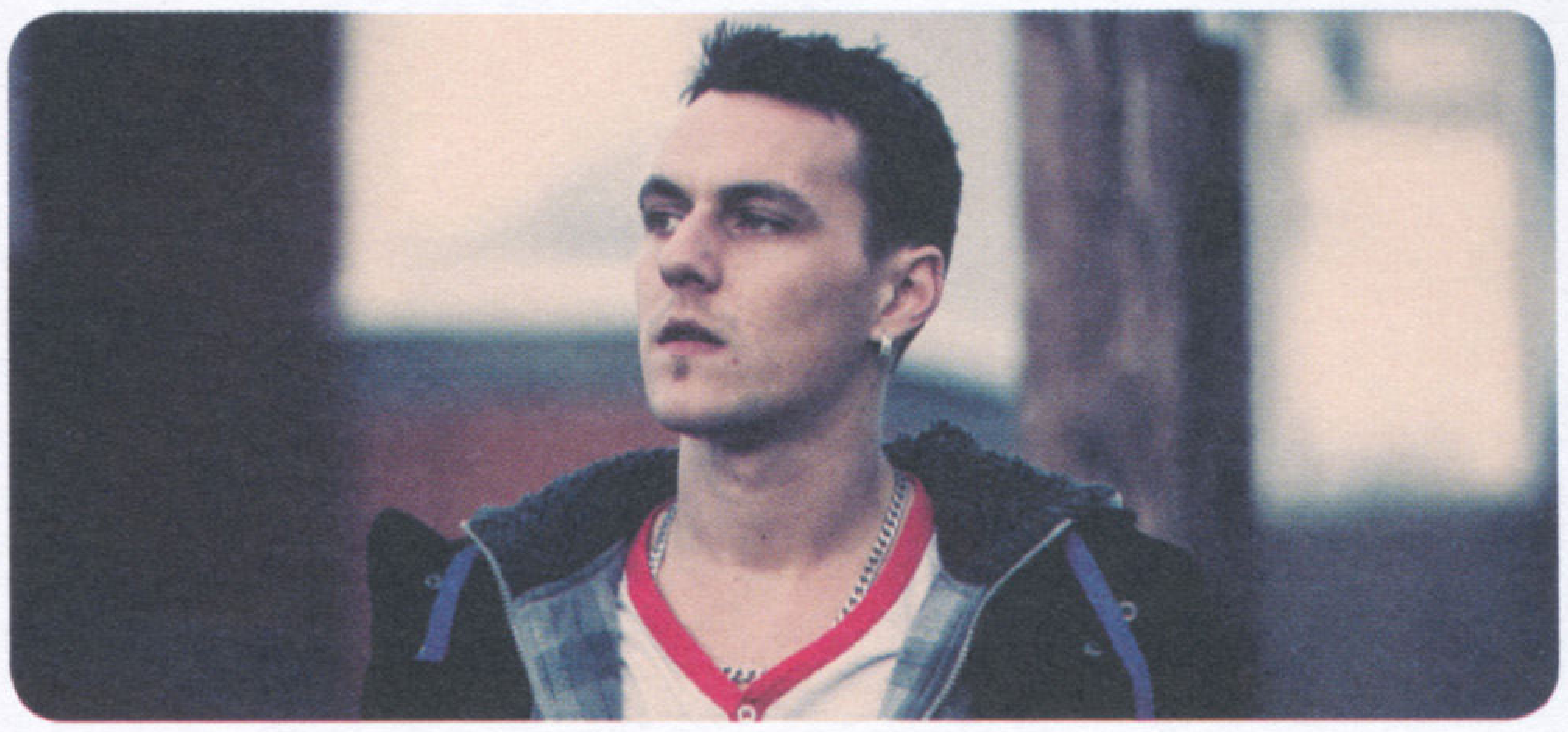
Directed by ***Gavin Wiesen***
Starring ***Freddie Highmore, Emma Roberts, Michael Angarano***
Released ***September 2***

The debut of writer/director Gavin Wiesen might advertise its blagger nous but unfortunately it doesn't have a thing to teach us. In this seldom-successful tale of first love and finding your voice, Freddie Highmore is George, a bright but disaffected teenager. When he takes the blame for her smoking violation, he falls in with (and for) the capricious Sally (Emma Roberts). Meanwhile, he's tasked with completing a year's worth of assignments in three weeks. Hitherto best known as the moppet in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Highmore is terrific in moments of vulnerability but, in casting this delicate actor as a rebellious outsider, *The Art of Getting By* marks itself as a film with zero cool. Cliché-ridden and merely watchable at best, it makes scant attempt to lift itself from the cinematic doldrums and fails to convincingly set itself apart from its peers. **Emma Simmonds** **2 2 2**

3D Sex and Zen: Extreme Ecstasy

Directed by ***Christopher Sun Lap Key***
Starring ***Saori Hara, Leni Lan, Vonnie Lui***
Released ***September 2***

If the concept of 3D porn has you sitting back expectantly waiting to be slapped in the face with a giant penis, you're halfway to enjoying this bizarre reboot of Hong Kong's cult sex comedy. When cocky youngster Wei Yangsheng (Hiro Hayama) heads to the Prince of Ning's Pavilion of Ultimate Bliss (because he's unable to pleasure his wife), he's thrust into an orgiastic world where bouncy concubines attend his every need and mystical women spin wheels on the end of their giant snake-like schlongs. Soon he's succumbed to peer pressure and is having a donkey dick sewn on where his puny pecker used to be, but he's in too deep to notice the women shot, raped and literally fucked-to-death around him. Comedy moments and hammy acting rub up against some pretty grotty torture porn and alarmingly casual rape. There's lots of sex but not much Zen. **Kat Halstead 4 2 2**



Self Made

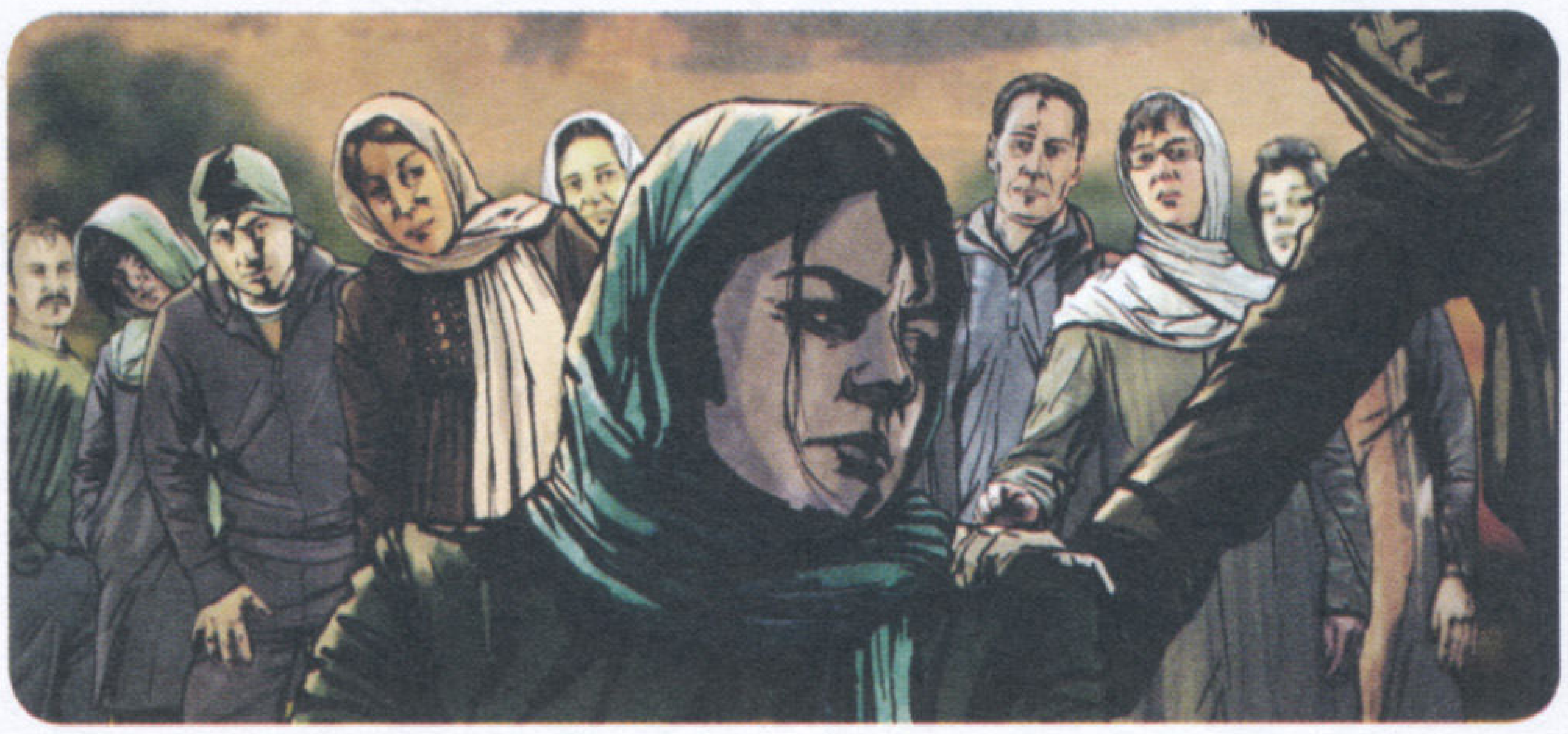
Directed by ***Gillian Wearing***
Starring ***Sam Rumbelow, Asheq Akhtar, Lesley Robinson***
Released ***September 2***

Method acting is often seen as a long-winded way of pretending to be somebody else. But Gillian Wearing's fascinating documentary brings the technique away from the rarefied atmosphere of the theatre workshop. Seven members of the public find themselves under the tutelage of method acting teacher Sam Rumbelow, who works to access the deep-seated emotions of the volunteers. As the group works towards filming individual scenes, they begin to discover new things about themselves and find that the method may be a lot more than acting. In some ways this is a cousin to recent British documentary *The Arbor*, examining the cracks between fantasy and reality as we wonder just how much people are actually 'acting'. There are times when you do wonder what all this is achieving, but *Self Made* is an intelligent and often affecting look at a misunderstood process. **Laurence Boyce 2 3 4**

The Debt

Directed by ***John Madden***
Starring ***Helen Mirren, Tom Wilkinson, Ciaran Hinds***
Released ***September 30***

This much-delayed film is a reworking of 2007 Israeli drama *Ha-hov*. Beginning in the present day, Rachel (Helen Mirren) and her estranged husband Stefan (Tom Wilkinson) are revered as war heroes. But something is wrong. We are then whisked to the years following World War II, with Mossad consumed with the search for Nazi criminals. In Berlin, three inexperienced agents are tasked with finding and capturing Klaus Vogel (Jesper Christensen), a war criminal now working as a gynaecologist. A young and radiant Rachel (Jessica Chastain) must feign pregnancy to prove Vogel's identity. Her co-conspirators, David (Sam Worthington) and Stefan (Marton Csokas), nervously lurk outside. This is no good Nazi parable: "Why do you think it was so easy to exterminate you Jews?" Vogel asks Rachel. "Its because you are all so weak." This is fluid cinema, but there's a strain of conservatism at its core. **Tom Seymour 3 3 2**



The Green Wave

Directed by ***Ali Samadi Ahadi***
Starring ***Mitra Khalatbari, Shadi Sadr, Payam Akhavan***
Released ***September 30***

Aesthetically similar to Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*, this documentary about Iran's 2009 election protests mixes animation with talking heads and archive footage to represent a devastating period. First-hand accounts from bloggers, activists, electoral employees and academics take us through a sequence of events that starts with the hopeful campaign of reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi – whose supporters wear green in solidarity. After the election was rigged by current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, thousands of Iranian people took to the streets to protest peacefully, but the military were brought in, and the violent crackdown verged on genocide. A low point sees Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – a man who once symbolised Iranian liberation – condemn any sort of insurgency. That the events are so recent, and conditions still so volatile, makes this documentary sadly poignant. **Shelley Jones 3 4 4**

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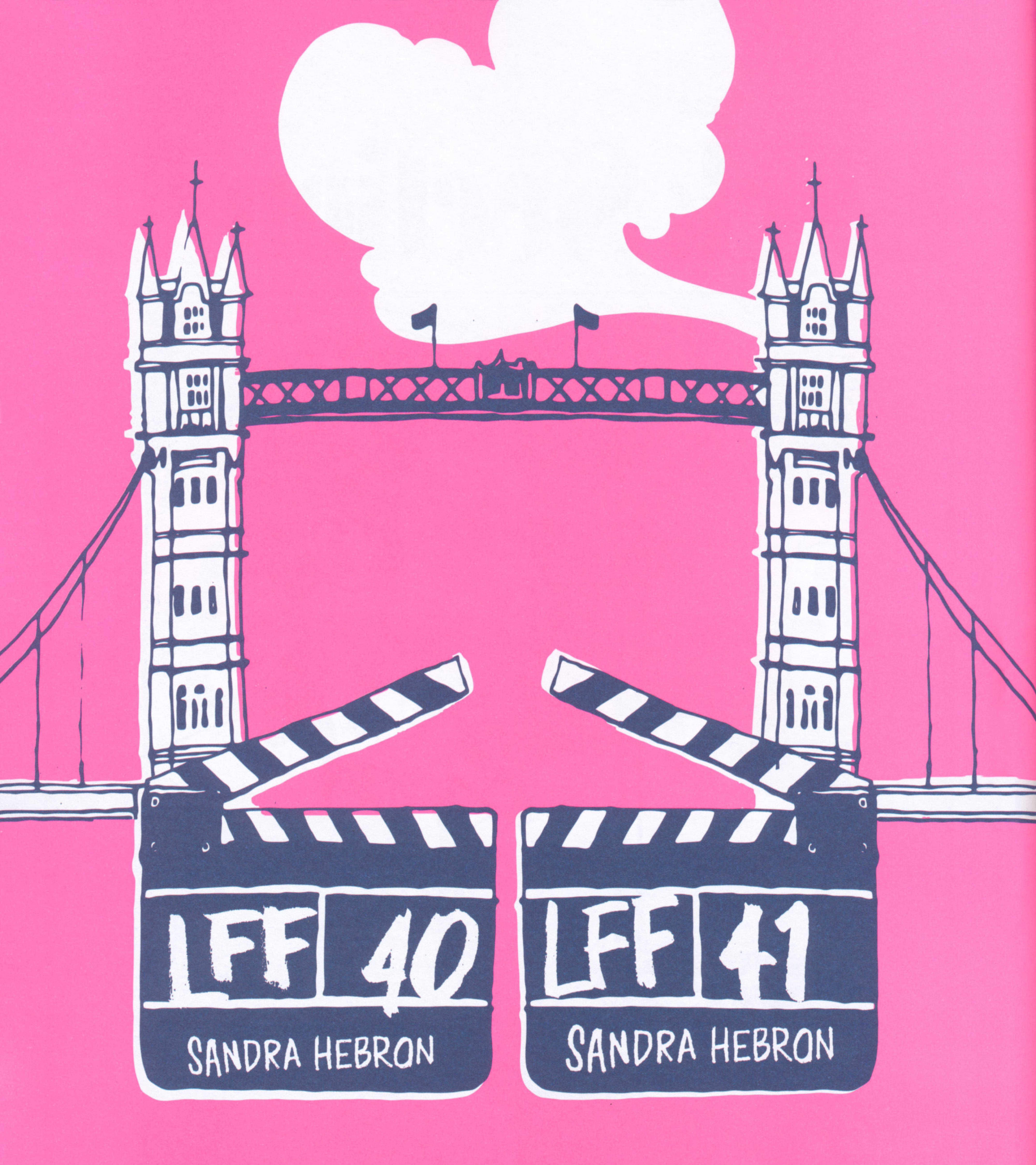
LFF 40
SANDRA HEBRON
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SANDRA HEBRON

EXIT INTERVIEW

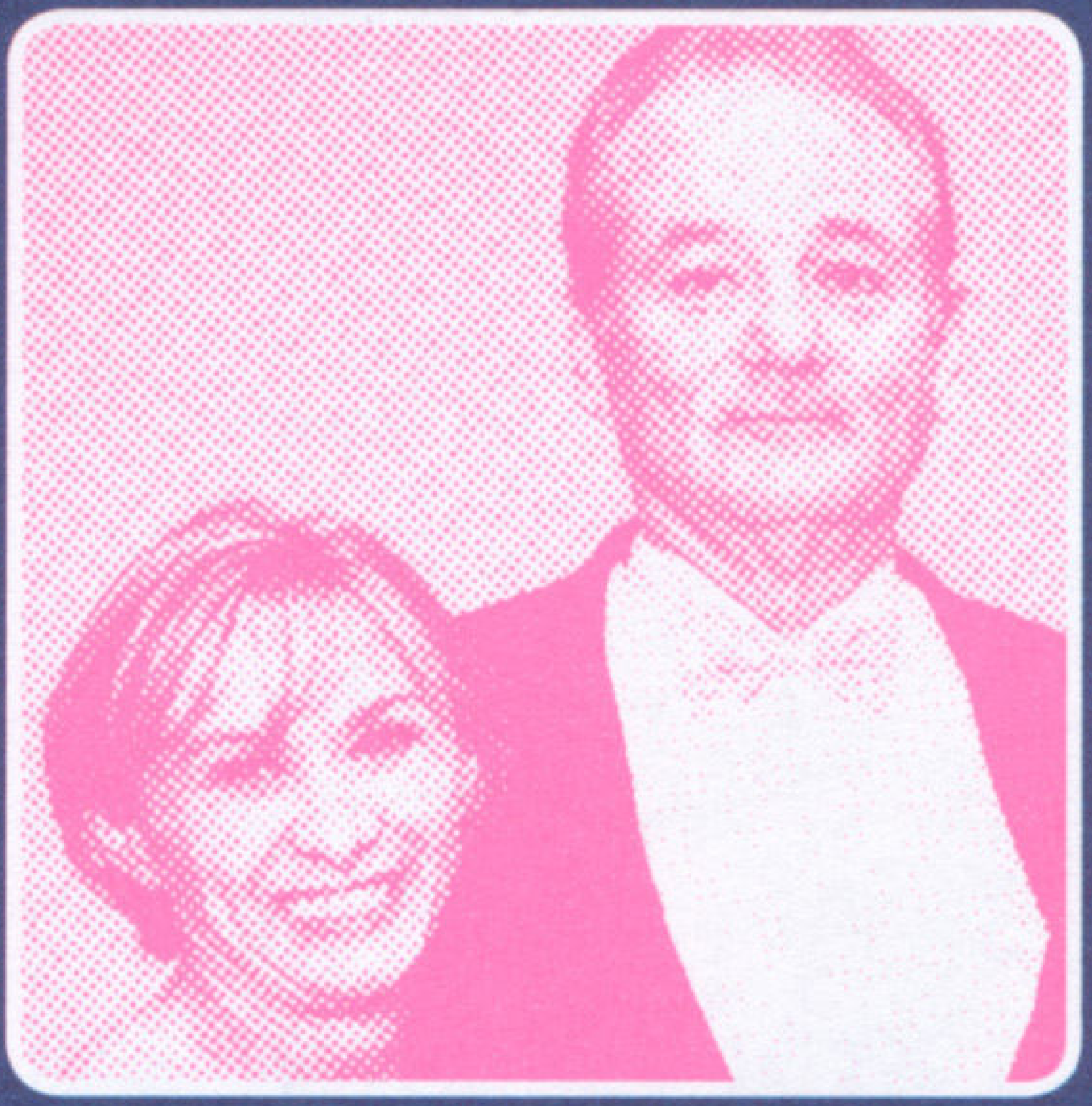
As Sandra Hebron steps down from her post as Artistic Director of the London Film Festival, LWLies catches up with her to talk memories and movies.

Why are you leaving the LFF?
I always said I'd leave it before I started going through the motions. If you start feeling you're doing the same thing every year, people can tell. I want to leave before that happens.

What are you going to do?
I'm actually training to be a psychotherapist. It's a great way of learning more about what makes people tick – and so much of my job now is about relationships with people. I'm hoping I'll still be doing some film work because, apart from working behind a bar, that's the only thing I know how to do. So I'll either get some film work or I'll be the oldest barmaid in London.

How have you changed the festival in your time here?
When I first came to it in 1997, the LFF was referred to as 'the Hoover festival'. It just hoovered up whatever was left. I've got some very old-fashioned ideas of integrity and cultural debate. I wanted to make it clear we're not the sort of festival that takes a film because we're promised a certain person on the red carpet.

So how have you picked the films that you've shown?
I programme the festival that I want to go to. I want to go to a festival where I can see the new film by Steven Soderbergh but also I'll see a three-minute short by an experimental filmmaker who made it in their bedroom for £2.50. I think it was Jonas Mekas who said, 'Cinema is a tree with many branches'. That's a lovely way of encapsulating it. I hope we've made the festival feel a bit warmer and more welcoming, for audiences and for filmmakers. I used to come to the festival before I worked on it and somehow it never felt very friendly. The LFF is a festival that takes film seriously, but isn't afraid to have fun.



Sandra & Bill

So how has the LFF changed you? Do you ever get tired of watching films?
I never get tired of watching films. Sometimes I get tired of watching bad films. I'm at home, ploughing through a stack of DVDs on Saturday, and by Saturday night, I'm sort of at my wits end. Tragic as it sounds, what I would often do is go to the cinema, hand over cash and watch something just to remember that cinema can be amazing.

Any great moments from the festival that you'll always remember?
When we screened *The Straight Story*, [actor] Richard Farnsworth came in with the film and he was already quite elderly and frail. At the end of the film, I took Richard onto the stage. There was just such a feeling of warmth for him. The audience were all on their feet. Richard was crying. David Lynch was crying. I was crying. It was the most amazing experience.

Anything you'd change if you could go back and start over?
Oh god… there's a million things. Not least some quite terrible introductions I've made to films. I don't think there's anything I've programmed that I wouldn't have. If I could, I'd make all the ticket prices cheaper, obviously.

How was London itself changed in your time here?
One of the most exciting things is the huge proliferation of self-generated cultural activity. Any week, you've got films screening under a flyover, make-your-own film festivals, cinema clubs, films on a roof… It does feel like there's more of that incredible vibrancy in London.

Are you looking forward to coming to the festival as a normal person next year?
As opposed to the freak that I currently am? I sort of can't wait for that. I'll be thrilled to go the parties and behave without any sense of responsibility.

The 54th BFI London Film Festival runs from October 13-28. We'll be covering the whole shebang online. bfi.org.uk/lff

Once Upon a Time in the West (1968)

Directed by Sergio Leone
Released September 5

Between 1964 and 1968, Italian director Sergio Leone produced four films, each one better than the last, culminating in perhaps the greatest western ever made. It was a period of extraordinary vitality, worthy of being ranked alongside the contemporaneous work of Jean-Luc Godard in its importance to the cinema of the time.

That final film, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, built on but far outstripped the stylistic elements and narrative tropes of 'The Man with No Name' trilogy (*A Fistful of Dollars*, *A Few Dollars More*, *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*). It is an elegiac but ruthless vision of a frontier on the brink of civilisation, one in which the heroes and villains of an earlier age have been shaded together. Though beaten by the glare of a blazing sun, this is a wild west of shadows.

After flying to New York, Leone convinced Henry Fonda, the great American hero of *High Noon*, to take on the role of Frank – the blue-eyed killer sent to secure a piece of land crucial to the interests of the railroad. After murdering the owner, the land passes to the man's widow, Jill, played by Claudia Cardinale in the full bloom of her considerable beauty, so defiantly at odds with the parched landscape around her.

As Jill stands up to Frank and his gang, her cause is joined by Harmonica (a coolly detached Charles Bronson in a role that Clint Eastwood rejected), a near-silent gunslinger pursuing a mysterious vendetta against Frank. In the middle of the desert, the fate of these individuals, and the character of a nation, will be decided in blood.

With its long, still shots and sudden, spasmodic violence, *Once Upon a Time in the West* is cinematic myth-making of the most compelling kind. Though not as explosively revisionist or provocative as Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, released only a year later, Leone's film captured something of the revolutionary stirrings of its era, reformulating and interrogating the perceived values not just of the western genre, but of the origins of America's modern civilisation.

This is a west in which everything is up for grabs by those who are bold enough to take it, and the old labels of 'hero' and 'villain' scarcely apply. If Henry Fonda can gun down women and children in cold blood, then all bets are off.

But Leone had more tricks up his sleeve than that. A mournful and rhapsodic score from regular composer Ennio Morricone granted Leone's vision a peculiar kind of nostalgia and fitful sadness. It is, if anything, with a sense of regret that *Once Upon a Time in the West* closed the door on the spaghetti western and the decade – and, to some extent, Leone's own career. Though he would continue to make movies for almost two decades, he only came close to recapturing the astonishing power of his golden period with his final film, *Once Upon a Time in America*, released in 1984. Matt Bochenski

September

The Panic in Needle Park: Special Edition (1971)

Directed by Jerry Schatzberg
Released September 5

Al Pacino's first starring role came in this story of love and betrayal set in New York's junk den, Needle Park. Boasting mainstream cinema's first real drug injection, the film goes further than most to capture the true psyche of a heroin addict.

8 Million Ways to Die (1986)

Directed by Hal Ashby
Released September 12

Director Hal Ashby's last film, *8 Million Ways to Die*, is the story of an alcoholic narcotics cop, played by Jeff Bridges, seeking one last shot at redemption. The film combines possibly the most convincing portrayal of a drunk alongside Oliver Stone's last popcorn flick script before he turned all Vietnam on our assess.

Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)

Directed by Blake Edwards
Released September 12

Distilling everything exotic and cool, but also alienating and tragic, about New York City, Blake Edwards' 1961 classic created some of our most enduring collective memories of this iconic movie location, and cemented Audrey Hepburn's status as a timeless icon of both screen and style.

My Voyage to Italy (1999)

Directed by Martin Scorsese
Released September 26

Celebrating almost a century of Italian cinema, *My Voyage to Italy* is Martin Scorsese's personal tribute to the nation's most influential films. Essentially a four-hour Italian cinema class, you'll either love it or loathe it – but Scorsese definitely loves it. And to be honest, so should you.

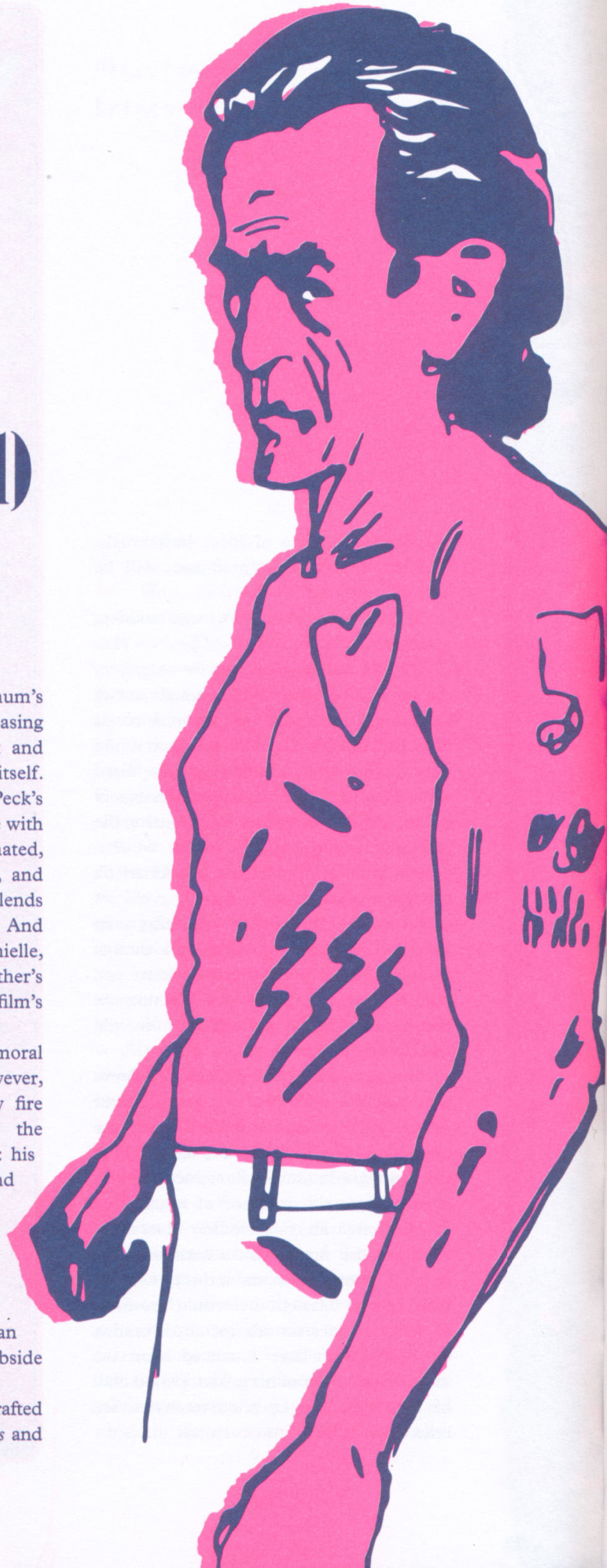
Harakiri (1962)

Directed by Masaki Kobayashi
Released September 26

Masaki Kobayashi's samurai epic took the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1963 for its 'scathing denouncement of feudal authority and hypocrisy'. This Blu-ray release reaffirms *Harakiri* as one of the best samurai films ever made. Look out for a 3D reimagining coming later this year. Jon Harris

Cape Fear (1991)

Directed by Martin Scorsese
Released October 10



Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* is not what you would call a subtle film. With its lurid colour palette, exaggerated performances and flourishes of Grand Guignol humour, this is an exercise in excess, tonally very different from its ostensible source (J Lee Thompson's workmanlike 1962 thriller of the same name).

The plot will probably be familiar: having served 14 years in jail for sexual assault, Max Cady (Robert De Niro) targets his former attorney, Sam Bowden (Nick Nolte), who soon discovers that the police are powerless to defend him from the vengeful brute. Desperate, Bowden escapes with his wife Leigh (Jessica Lange) and daughter Danielle (Juliette Lewis) to a houseboat on storm-lashed Cape Fear – only to find that his tormentor has come along for the ride.

Thompson's original starred Robert Mitchum as Cady, with Gregory Peck as the beleaguered lawyer. At one stage, Scorsese considered wholesome Robert Redford for the latter role; that he eventually plumped for the rather more louche Nolte tells us all about his intentions here.

Where the first *Cape Fear* was pitched as a Manichaean contest between good and evil (notwithstanding Mitchum's faintly subversive, audience-pleasing twinkle), the remake locates doubt and conflict within the Bowden family itself. Nolte's Sam is far removed from Peck's pure patriarch; although his dalliance with a younger colleague goes unconsummated, the script hints at prior infidelities, and Leigh is evidently unhappy (Lange lends her a distant, Prozac-tinged gaze). And then there's Lewis' coquettish Danielle, sufficiently tempted by her father's pursuer to suck on his thumb in the film's most deliciously queasy scene.

Despite his efforts to add some moral complexity to the material, however, one suspects that it failed to truly fire Scorsese's imagination. Not that the project lacks his cine-literate stamp: his camerawork is typically kinetic, and there are allusions aplenty (at the denouement, Sam waits one nail-biting moment for a wounded Cady to sink into the river – an inspired nod to that famous scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, in which Norman Bates watches Marion Crane's car subside into the swamp).

But compared with his lovingly crafted efforts of the same period – *Goodfellas* and

The Age of Innocence – Scorsese's pacing here seems uneven, the *mise-en-scène* bereft of detail. Like the later *Shutter Island*, the impression is of an enjoyable but slight genre piece dashed off to keep the financiers sweet (as the money men counted the takings, Marty dreamt of *Kundun*).

The actors, by contrast, appear to be having great fun. The supporting cast is superb – Joe Don Baker's deadpan turn as a Pepto-Bismol-swilling private dick is especially memorable – but this, of course, is De Niro's film. He fairly swaggers through his scenes, his muscular frame emblazoned with tattoos ("I don't know whether to look at him or read him," intones Mitchum, present for a brief cameo), spouting Old Testament verse in a Southern drawl. By the end, he has become nothing less than monstrous, like some demonic creature risen from the bayou to wreak havoc, before the churning waters reclaim him at last.

Though it merits only a middling rank in the Scorsese canon, then, there are more than enough reasons to revisit *Cape Fear*. The additional features included in this new Blu-ray package – deleted scenes, a 'making of' documentary, and a slideshow of behind-the-scenes photographs – are little better than perfunctory, but the high-definition transfer is welcome. David Evans

October

This Boy's Life (1993)

Directed by Michael Caton-Jones
Released October 10

Leonardo DiCaprio shines in his first lead role in this melodramatic tale of a resilient teenager striving for liberation from his adoptive father. Although De Niro makes for a surprisingly good neurotic weirdo, it's DiCaprio who steals the show.

George Harrison: Living in the Material World (2011)

Directed by Martin Scorsese
Released October 10

The latest instalment in Martin Scorsese's series of rock docs, *Living in the Material World* closely follows the spiritual path taken by one of the world's greatest guitarists, George Harrison. With never-seen-before footage, letters and interviews with some of his closest friends, this Blu-ray is bound to be of interest.

Life in a Day (2011)

Directed by Kevin Macdonald
Released October 10

Life in a Day is an ingenious attempt to collate over 80,000 YouTube submissions from a seemingly random day in July, and turn them into something of interest. A celebration of all human existence, *Life in a Day* is a rollercoaster of emotions. Sit back and let it ride through you; it's impossible to digest everything.

West Side Story (1961)

Directed by Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise
Released October 17

Based on the smash hit Broadway re-imagining of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* is one of the most critically acclaimed musicals ever to hit cinema screens. Famed for it's groundbreaking choreography, this one dances it's way onto Blu-ray and isn't to be missed.

Three Colours Trilogy Box Set (1993-94)

Directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski
Released October 24

Krzysztof Kieslowski's career as one of Europe's finest directors is to be celebrated once more with a special re-release of his highly acclaimed 'Three Colours Trilogy' box set. Set in the shadows of post-Cold War Europe, *Blue*, *White* and *Red* explore the French revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood, respectively. Jon Harris

Ex-Rent Hell Presents...

RUSSKIES

(1987)

Directed by Rick Rosenthal
Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Whip Hubley, Carole King
Box Markings: Extreme water damage; "Whip 'Top Gun' Hubley stars in..."
Tagline: 'Sometimes even the worst of enemies can become the best of friends.'
Trailers: The Woo-Woo Kid, Orphans, The Time Guardian
Cherrypick: "Your dad didn't even fight in Vietnam!" "Yeah, well, he wanted to – he just had bad knees."

"In Europe and America, there's a growing feeling of hysteria," warbled Sting in soft rock ballad 'Russians'. And just for once, the jumped-up Geordie was right. In the mid-'80s, Western suspicion of the Soviet Mir space station, the fallout of Chernobyl and the war in Afghanistan were concerns that, for many, outweighed the promise of *glasnost*.

Nowhere were these fears more keenly felt than the Keys of Florida, where three kids, armed only with an in-bred hatred for the repression of individual freedoms, and *Captain Slammer* comics, were fighting their own Cold War…

It's July 4 and the partygoers of Key West Army base are drunk on a cocktail of xenophobia and Mickey's Big Mouth. Emblematic of what is evidently the worst run military installation on US soil, this dereliction of duty allows a Soviet destroyer to get within a stone's throw of the Florida coast. Why are they there? Not sure. All we need to know is that after sailing 7,000 miles from Polyarny to within sight of the Epcot Center, no doubt bent on some fiendish commie incursion, they select for the task not some highly resourced black-ops wet-jobber, but naïve radio operator Misha (Whip Hubley), who they bung over the side in the hope he'll somehow come up trumps.

After gamely bouncing off a few rocks and almost drowning, Misha is found by our three pre-teen heroes – card-carrying Army brats to a man. Dressed entirely in camo aside from T-shirts bearing such legends as 'Eat Pennsylvanian Lead, Borscht Face!' it's clear that Christmas has come early for these little fuckers. They soon have Misha tied up with bungee cords, locked in an ideological debate on the practical applications of the Geneva Convention, and drunk on vodka.

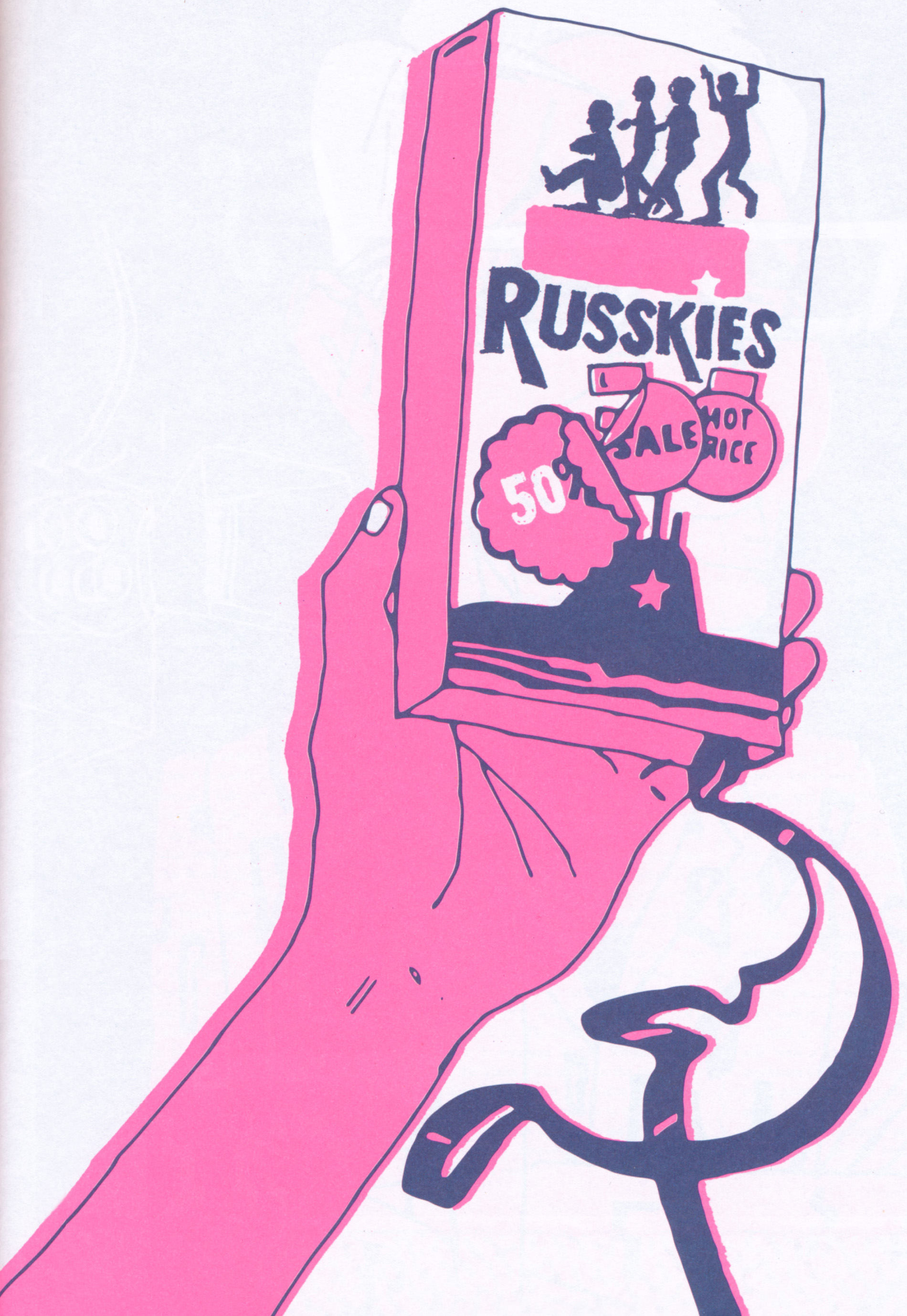
These are, of course, children of their time. And place. Here, the thudding McCarthyism of '50s sci-fi seems like lily-livered liberalism. Communism, communists and 'goddamn Russkies' are all anyone talks about in this 'burg. When, for instance, one of our trio's fathers has his radio signal spoiled by static, he leaps out of his chair, bellows, "Nuclear winter!" and mercy-kills the dog before cramming his family into a hurricane shelter.

Gradually, however, the kids are won over by Misha's haircut, and show him all the opportunity and excitement the free market economy has to offer – which, thanks to a limited budget, comprises the back nine of a crazy golf course and a bucket of KFC.

After spending a disconcerting amount of the subsequent running time hanging round the docks with his young chums and spouting garbage like, "America take bite from ass of life!" Misha's cover is – perhaps mercifully – blown while saving the life of a manta ray from some boorish paramilitary fisherman. The adventure is over. Or is it…?

Not with phrases like, "We're taking Ivan to Cuba on the *American Dream*!" (a boat, disappointingly, not the concept) and Joaquin Phoenix in a jetpack, it isn't. It is these two eminently binnable ideas that summon the entire cast to the deck of a recently surfaced Russian sub half way to the Bay of Pigs. Here, they shuffle about, staring past the camera for some sign that the film has reached the 90-minute mark.

It is, like the dissolution of the Soviet states, an anticlimactic end that throws up more questions than answers. But as Misha is returned to the bosom of Mother Russia (read: the Gulag), our heroes learn the answer to Sting's query: the Russians do indeed love their children, just in their own special way. Adam Lee Davies


RUSSKIES
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Cult Hero

LINA WERTMÜLLER

(1926-PRESENT)

Words by Paul Fairclough

It's a measure of how far Lina Wertmüller, the first woman to be nominated for a Best Director Oscar, has been erased from cinematic legend that when you tell people you're writing about the woman who made *Swept Away*, they invariably tell you that *Who's That Girl* was the only good thing she ever committed to film.

Back in 1976, the year that a 50-year-old Wertmüller was in the running for that gold statuette, she was already being hailed in Europe and the US as a new Fellini, and her grotesque, vicious and very funny films were making box-office as well as column inches.

The film for which she was nominated, *Seven Beauties*, falls somewhere between Roberto Benigni's *Life is Sweet* and Nazi bongo flick *Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS*, and thus was not exactly what would today be called 'awards fodder'. But Wertmüller's star was on the rise after a string of impressively confrontational movies that boldly put conflict – between men and women, rich and poor, left and right – at their centre and poked and harried their audience into thinking for themselves with such charm and good humour that nobody much minded the ideological exposition.

At some stage, confrontation with authority is *de rigueur* for posh girls, and Wertmüller is certainly posh, with an aristocratic Swiss background and a childhood spent being shunted from one upper-crust school to another – a dozen, it's said – after bad behaviour saw her kicked out time and again. The difference with Arcangela Felice Assunta Job Wertmüller von Elgg Espanol von Braucich (to give the director her full name) is that very few posh girls make a career of confrontation, and even fewer align themselves so permanently and actively with the left. But then she does claim that her childhood hero was Pancho Villa.

* * *

Her first film, *The Lizards* (1963), was made shortly after her big break as Fellini's assistant on *8½*, and echoed the previous decade's cinema with its story of frustrated youth dreaming of a better life in Rome. Wertmüller met Fellini through a school friend, who happened to be the wife of Marcello Mastroianni. She left behind a life touring with a puppet show theatre and auditioning for the stage to join a second revolution in European film but, it took 10 years of writing and directing B-pictures and TV strands before she found her own style.

The 1972 Palme d'Or nominee, *The Metalworker Mimi, Wounded in Honour* (no truck here with the reductive shortening of Wertmüller's magnificent titles – it's also known as *The Seduction of Mimi*) tells of how a southern Italian worker's flight from the Mafia leads him into the arms of an enlightened, sexy Trot. She holds the promise of happiness, but his inability to overcome his own conservative machismo leads him back to the life he despises. It is a comedy, but a very bitter one.

The star of that movie, Giancarlo Giannini, became something of a muse to Wertmüller, and was key to the success of Swept Away by an Unusual Destiny in the *Blue Sea of August* (1974).

He once again played a blue-collar guy, this time a deckhand crewing the yacht of a rich bitch. When they become castaways, their power relations begin to shift back and forth as Wertmüller again dissects class and gender struggles with comedy, shouting and sex.

Wertmüller has made about a film a year since cinema appeared to lose interest in her; some very good, like *The Blue Collar Worker and the Hairdresser in a Whirl of Sex and Politics* (1996), and some, like *Me, Let's Hope I Make It* (1992), not so great. Her politics remain solidly left-wing, as she admits: "I am on the left and always have been. I have always had great affinity for the cause and have always been on the side of the poor."

She puts her changing fortunes down to the 'sick' business of moviemaking. But although a feminist, she doesn't blame patriarchy for her lack of profile these days. "Fellini was not treated well toward the end," she's said, musing on her mentor.

And so Wertmüller, now in her eighties and with a daughter she adopted at 62, continues to defy convention and refuses to melt quietly into the wings. She's sanguine about her work's relative obscurity. In fact, she has an admirable perspective. "If you don't get to see my films," she once said, "then it is too bad for you."

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IN WHICH WE TRACK FUTURE RELEASES
ON THE LWLIES RADAR

THE IRON LADY

DIRECTED BY Phyllida Lloyd **ETA** January 2012

Footage Meryl Streep's predictably uncanny portrayal of Margaret Thatcher is winning her some serious awards buzz for next year. From the evidence of the trailer, she's outdone herself, capturing Thatcher's unique brand of patrician snobbery. We can't wait to see Richard E Grant's take on Michael Heseltine, either.

CLOUD ATLAS

DIRECTED BY Tom Tykwer, Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski **ETA** Winter 2012

News Tom Tykwer's adaptation of David Mitchell's legendary SF novel now has a release date pencilled in for October 2012, and has assembled a top-drawer cast including Tom Hanks, Susan Sarandon and Halle Berry. Filming began in September.

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

DIRECTED BY Marc Webb **ETA** July 2012

Footage The first trailer for this Spidey reboot initially made it look as if Webb was going down the Nolan route, with dark, edgy scenes of Peter Parker (Andrew Garfield) filmed in muted shades of grey and brown. Then, it burst into a frankly ridiculous first-person CGI-a-thon that made us all roll our eyes and think of *The Green Lantern*. The superhero bandwagon rolls on, in other words.

LOGAN'S RUN

DIRECTED BY Nicolas Winding Refn **ETA** 2012

News Yes, it's a remake of the campy Michael York sci-fi vehicle — but we have good reason to be excited about this. For one, Refn will bring his signature dark aesthetic to it. For another, the screenplay is by Alex Garland, and what's more, Ryan Gosling is set to star. Filming is due to begin before the end of the year.

DJANGO UNCHAINED

DIRECTED BY Quentin Tarantino **ETA** Winter 2012

Casting Can *Django Unchained* do for Kevin Costner what *Pulp Fiction* did for John Travolta? You might just find out next year, as the '90s superstar takes a role as an evil henchman alongside Leonardo DiCaprio's villain in QT's spaghetti western. Jamie Foxx plays the eponymous slave-turned-bounty hunter bent on revenge.

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

DIRECTED BY Christopher Nolan **ETA** July 2012

Footage The public got a first look at the final part of Nolan's Batman trilogy a full year before its release, and a skimpy slice of footage it was, too. Plot details are still thin on the ground, but if the half-second glimpse of Tom Hardy's musclebound Bane is anything to go by, we can confirm this: shit is going to get real.

HUGO

DIRECTED BY Martin Scorsese **ETA** December 2011

Footage If you didn't know Marty had directed this 1930s-set kids movie, would you have guessed it from the trailer? Thanks to a cloying soundtrack by 30 Seconds to Mars and irritating mugging by Sacha Baron Cohen, we've not been this indifferent to a Scorsese film since *Kundun*.

PARADISE LOST

DIRECTED BY Alex Proyas **ETA** 2012

WTF?! We trust that when John Milton wrote his epic poem back in the seventeenth century, he envisioned that the fascinating, complex character of Lucifer would one day be brought to life with state-of-the-art motion capture technology and voice work by Bradley Cooper. Seriously.

BYZANTIUM

DIRECTED BY Neil Jordan **ETA** 2012

News The Irish filmmaker is returning to the world of the undead, almost 20 years after *Interview with the Vampire*. Jordan has re-united with his *Crying Game* producer Steven Woolley for this tale of mother and daughter bloodsuckers, played by Gemma Arterton and Saoirse Ronan. Filming began in October.

WORLD WAR Z

DIRECTED BY Marc Forster **ETA** 2012.

News The long-awaited adaptation of Max Brooks' cult 2006 novel has finally started filming. Brad Pitt plays a UN official who travels the world in the aftermath of an international zombie outbreak, trying to figure out what went wrong. Early word has it that the script is heavy on Hurricane Katrina and BP oil spill references.

BOND 23

DIRECTED BY Sam Mendes **ETA** Winter 2012

Gossip After months of inactivity, the long-rumoured Mendes-directed Bond is now firmly in pre-production. Daniel Craig is back as 007, with Javier Bardem on villain duties and Ralph Fiennes cast as a fellow MI6 agent. We hear the plot sees Bond trying to prevent shadowy international crime syndicate Quantum from releasing a genetically engineered superflu. Topical!

LAST STAND

DIRECTED BY Kim Jee-Woon **ETA** 2013

News Mark your diaries: Arnold Schwarzenegger's return to the silver screen will happen in January 2013. He'll play an elderly cop in a sleepy border town who must prevent a drug kingpin from crossing back to Mexico. Hopefully, we'll all have forgotten about the whole love child thing by then.

BATTLESHIP

DIRECTED BY Peter Berg **ETA** May 2012

Footage What, you thought *Transformers* was going to be a one-off? The trailer for this adaptation of the 1980s board game (we're serious) proves the 'giant robots versus dumb humans' movie is becoming a viable genre. A fact to make indie filmmakers weep: this cost $200 million.

JOHN CARTER

DIRECTED BY Andrew Stanton **ETA** March 2012

Footage The so-so trailer for this tale of an American Civil War veteran suddenly transported to the midst of a Martian civil war would be ignorable were it not for one thing — the film is directed by Pixar alumnus and *Wall-E* director Andrew Stanton. It could yet be great, in other words.

THE DESCENDANTS

DIRECTED BY Alexander Payne **ETA** January 2012

Footage Payne's long-awaited return from the wilderness – eight years after *Sideways* – looks highly promising, even if the trailer appears to give away too much of the plot. George Clooney plays a bad dad attempting to reconnect with his daughters after his wife suffers a serious accident.

THE GREY

DIRECTED BY Joe Carnahan **ETA** Early 2012

Gossip Pay-cheque performer Liam Neeson could finally regain some credibility next year thanks to his role in this frigid thriller. Neeson plays the head of a team of oil-drillers who must fight off a pack of hungry wolves after their plane crashes in the Alaskan wilderness.

RUSH

DIRECTED BY Ron Howard **ETA** 2013

Casting Now that Ron Howard's *Dark Tower* trilogy has been nixed by Universal, the director will move onto this biopic of legendary 1970s Formula One driver Niki Lauda. The Peter Morgan-scripted drama stars Chris Hemsworth as Lauda's rival James Hunt. No doubt there'll be a part for Michael Sheen in there somewhere.

WAR HORSE

DIRECTED BY Steven Spielberg **ETA** January 2012

Footage The lush, tear-jerking trailer for Spielberg's adaptation of the National Theatre's hit World War I family drama has 'awards bait' written all over it. There's a stirring soundtrack, wistful voice-over, sweeping battle scenes and plenty of horseplay. We'd go on, but our eyes have become inexplicably moist.

RED HOOK SUMMER

DIRECTED BY Spike Lee **ETA** 2012

Gossip Spike Lee is said to have reunited many of the original cast of 1989's *Do The Right Thing* for this belated sequel, set in the rundown neighbourhood of Red Hook, Brooklyn. The Knicks fan himself returns as pizza delivery boy Mookie. And that's the truth, Ruth.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

DIRECTED BY Robert Redford **ETA** 2012

Casting Robert Redford has cast himself as a former US radical, loosely based on the Weather Underground's Bill Ayres, whose identity is uncovered by sleuthing journalist Shia LaBeouf. After the lacklustre *The Conspirator*, Redford is due a decent movie, surely?

WE FROZE THE FIRST MAN

DIRECTED BY Errol Morris **ETA** Autumn 2012

News The veteran documentarian turns his hand to drama, with this 1960s-set tale of the birth of cryogenics. Paul Rudd takes the lead, while *Stranger Than Fiction* director Zach Helm is on scripting duties.

THE BOURNE LEGACY

DIRECTED BY Tony Gilroy **ETA** August 2012

News Just as Bond returns, so does Jason Bourne. Well, sort of. Jeremy Renner won't actually play the character made famous by Matt Damon, but another of the brain-washed assassins from the Treadstone programme. Ed Norton is the villain, and Rachel Weisz the love interest. All things considered, we're more excited about Bond.

Next Issue
Discovered
November 2011
Little White Lies

"How are you supposed to know about stuff if they don't make it into a movie?"

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